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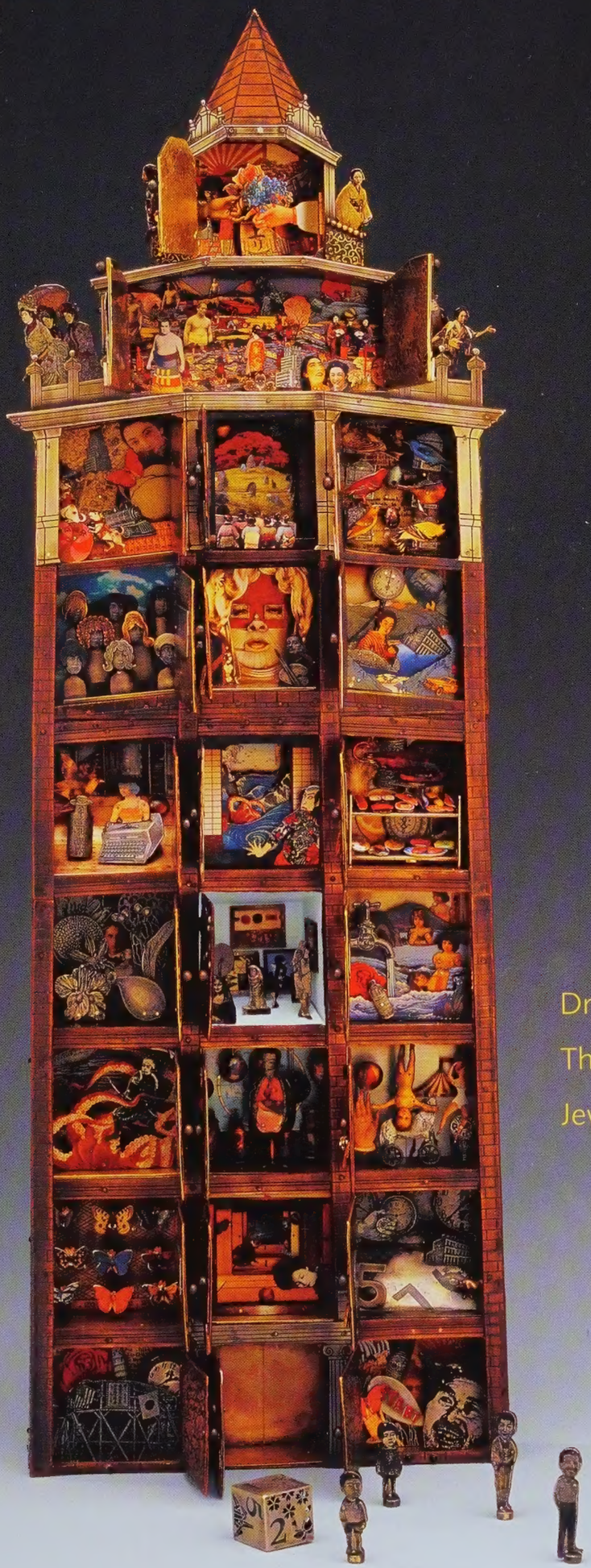

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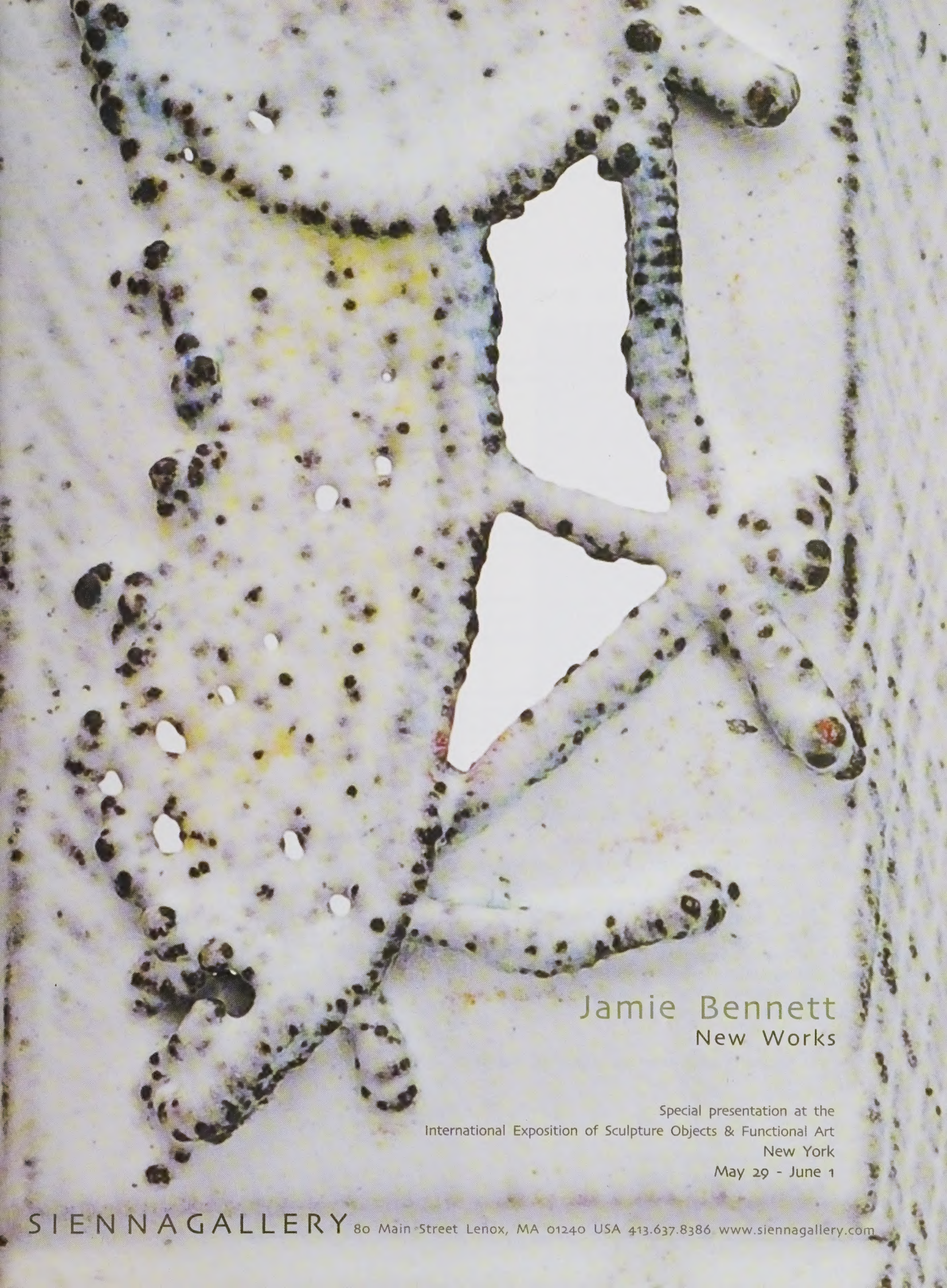

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Ryounkaku, 2006 (interior)
copper, brass, nickel silver, magnet, decal
height 27"
Photo: Dean Powell

from top
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Kaiten Zushi, 2004 (detail)

PETER CHANG
Table (detail), 1994

DEGANIT STERN SCHOCKEN
City from "How Many is One" series, 2003–04 (detail)

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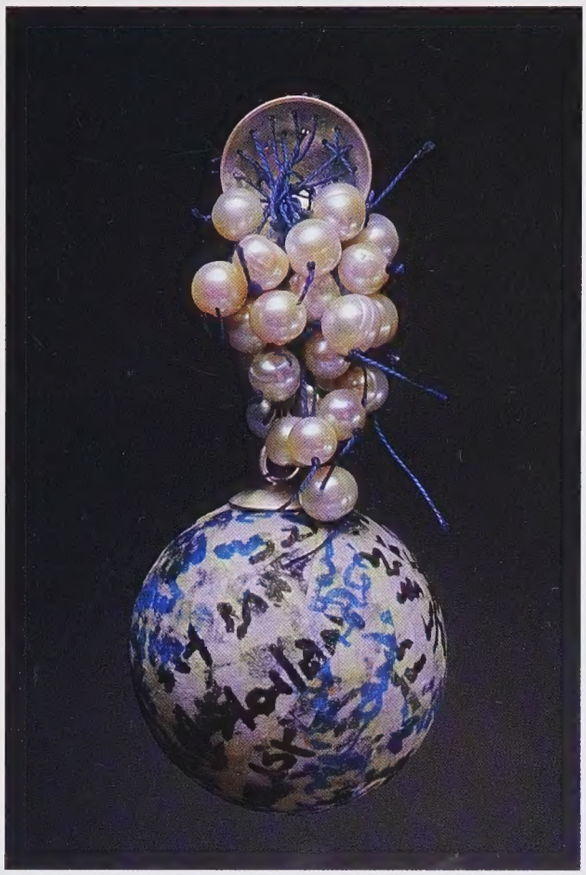

"Fabric of Life" brooch in washi paper, ink, sterling silver, pearl, silk and lacquer. By Kiwon Wang

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FROM THE EDITOR

SUZANNE RAMLJAK

An unwritten rule in art states that incomplete forms have greater powers of engagement. Like a naked body, fully resolved compositions leave little to the imagination and interest quickly fades. A case in point is the *Venus de Milo*, a broken ruin of a figure that has nonetheless gripped the public mind for centuries.

Many of the metalsmiths featured in this issue embrace artistic incompletion as their modus operandi. Cover artist Mariko Kusumoto's visually dense and multi-layered constructions reveal themselves slowly, requiring physical and conceptual participation. "Mentally, incomplete things have a lot of space," says Kusumoto. "Imagination completes the object in our mind, by compensating for the missing part." In casting us as collaborators, Kusumoto upholds the Japanese aesthetic principle of *shibui* beauty, which "makes an artist of the viewer."

Peter Chang's jewelry and objects, featured here, also set the stage for participatory involvement. By intentionally leaving his works untitled he courts individual interpretations. And his hybrid forms, which merge organic and high-tech shapes, force the mind to wrangle with various meanings. In a similar vein, John Marshall's open-ended works resonate on both symbolic and metaphoric levels. As Matthew Kangas writes, Marshall's sculptures encourage analysis, and can "open the doors of perception onto a fascinating internal world."

Of course the imagination can be spurred by the simplest of forms, such as small polished seashells or pebbles. In our "Possessed" department, Akiko Busch recounts the rich symbiosis between her collection of stone rings and her history of swimming across rivers. Wearing many of the rings at once, as she often does, Busch muses "these rivers are congregating on my hands just as surely and swiftly as they do in my own recall." She discovers that "the curious geography of human imagination is a waterway where it is possible for the Hudson and the Connecticut to momentarily converge."

Indeed, the most unexpected objects can set us loose in the strange terrain of the imagination. Whether partial forms have a greater draw in this direction may remain an unresolved conjecture.... ⌶

METALSMITH

a publication of SNAG, the organization for jewelers, designers, and metalsmiths

METALSMITH'S MISSION IS TO DOCUMENT, ANALYZE, AND PROMOTE EXCELLENCE IN JEWELRY AND METALWORKING.

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"fire water" necklace, 2007

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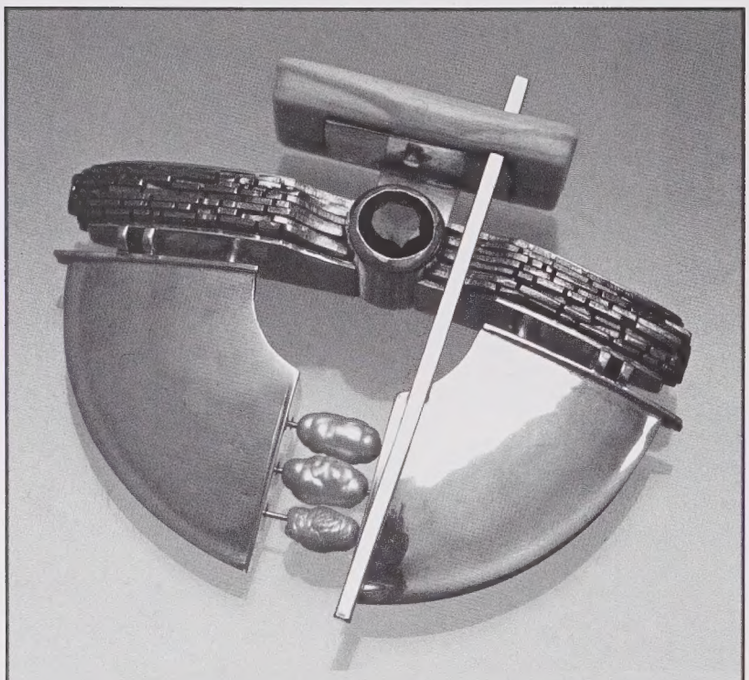

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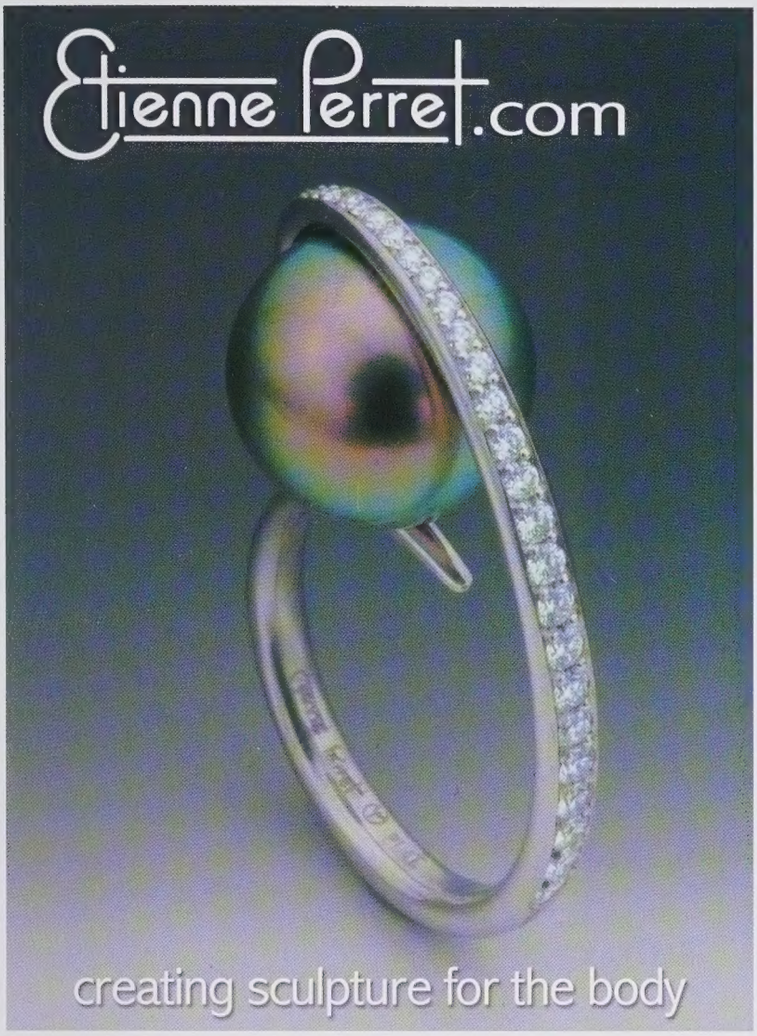

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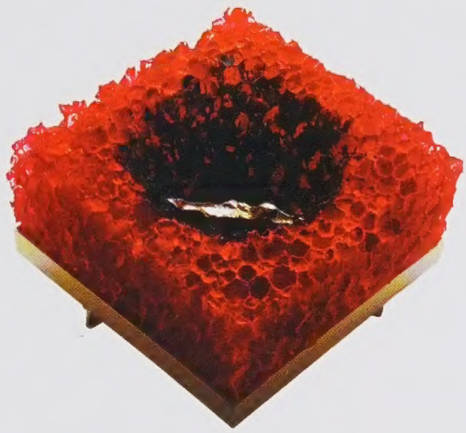

Top: Annamaria Zanella, brooch, 18ct, lacquer, fine gold, sponge
Bottom: Annamaria Zanella, necklace, iron, 18ct, glass beads

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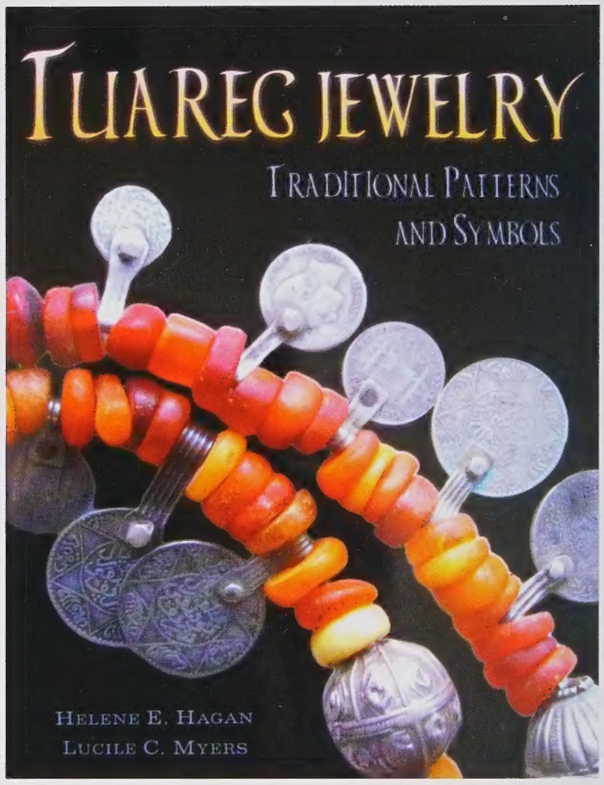


ART OF BEING TUAREG:
Sahara Nomads in a Modern World

THOMAS K. SELIGMAN AND KRISTYNE LOUGHRAN, EDS.
CANTOR ART CENTER AND UCLA FOWLER MUSEUM, 2006

TUAREG JEWELRY:
Traditional Patterns and Symbols

HELENE E. HAGAN AND LUCILE C. MYERS
XLIBRIS, 2006

by JENNIFER CROSS GANS

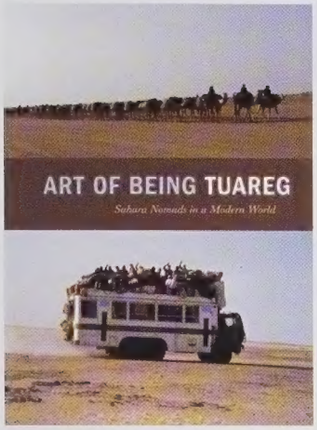
Who are the mysterious "Blue People" of the Sahara, who roam Niger and surrounding countries, swathe their men in indigo veils that dye their skin, and produce exquisite engraved silver jewelry? Two recent books, *Art of Being Tuareg* and *Tuareg Jewelry*, attempt to throw more light on these attractive but little-known nomads—with varying degrees of success. The former is much weightier, more scholarly, and more attractive. It was published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, and the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University. It was also heavily subsidized, allowing the authors to benefit from more academic input, professional photography, and access to major museum collections. Both the editors and the other six contributors have done extensive fieldwork in the area; one is even a Tuareg *inad* (metalsmith).

When France and other colonial powers carved up so much of Africa and the Middle East without regard to ethnic affiliations, untold damage was done to many peoples, particularly the Tuareg, who ended up as minorities in Algeria, Libya, Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. Ever since the exit of the French in 1960, there have been waves of armed resistance to the new governments (mostly Black Africans) that consistently shortchanged the Tuareg, whom they considered different, light-skinned, and the bottom of the heap. As these two books were published, the political situation worsened; today government soldiers roam the streets in pursuit of increasingly resolute resistance fighters. The uncertainty caused grief and dislocation, as well as ruining the tourist trade. Two years earlier, a devastating drought and famine had forced many Tuareg metalsmiths *inaden* to choose between buying food for their families and obtaining the supplies needed for their work.

Art of Being Tuareg has 10 separate chapters covering Tuareg history and social and cultural life, with photographs of the traditional and contemporary dress, weapons, furnishings, and leatherwork, and the harsh terrain they call home. Best of all is the information on *inaden*, with excellent and amply documented photographs of their jewelry.

Tuareg Jewelry is more specialized but more lightweight. Privately published, it is expensive, yet suffers from poor production: too many blurry photographs (none of which have the dimensions marked), lack of documentation and provenance, and irritating white-on-black printing. The main author, Helene Hagan, is often unclear whether she is just writing about the Tuareg or the broader Berber context in North Africa. Adding to the confusion, the artwork on the cover isn't even Tuareg; it's an antique Berber necklace from Morocco.

Both books, particularly *Art of Being Tuareg*, are of value to collectors who enjoy identifying their pieces and learning more about their cultural context. It comes as no surprise that the elegant Tuareg men and women all love jewelry, and wear lots of it, not just on important occasions. Traditionally, ornaments are given to young children, to teenagers at puberty, during engagement and marriage ceremonies, dowries, and as gifts to married women from their husbands. Some is to protect the wearer from bad luck or the evil eye; for example, amulets, the boxlike or



TODAY'S METALWORKERS MAY INDEED WONDER HOW TUAREG CRAFTSMEN ARE ABLE TO PRODUCE SUCH STYLISH WORK, WITH CLEAN, GEOMETRIC LINES AND DETAILED LINEAR ENGRAVING, PARTICULARLY SINCE MANY SMITHS WORK UNDER EXTREMELY PRIMITIVE CONDITIONS...

cylindrical *tcherot*, and the five-diamond-shaped pendant called the *khomessa* (derived from the Islamic Hand of Fatima). Increasingly, women's jewelry is worn more for fun and decoration, which accounts for the increasing popularity of gold, and decreasing knowledge of the meanings of the traditional engraved patterns.

Probably the best-known example of Tuareg jewelry is the so-called "Cross of Agadez," whose origins and significance have been debated for more than a century without, alas, reaching complete consensus. We do know that the "cross" probably has no Christian meaning, but was described as such by nineteenth-century Europeans because of its cruciform appearance. It comes in 21 shapes and patterns (two recent additional designs don't make the official list), and while it probably originated in Agadez, a major craft center in Niger, each "cross" has its own name, suggesting regional, and possibly tribal, identifiers. Locally, it is worn as a pendant by both men and women. Elsewhere it appears around the world in sculpture, soap, Hermès belt ornaments, and knockoffs in countries ranging from Mali to Bali.

Another certainty is the cross's construction, at least in the hands of Tuareg craftsmen. Helene Hagan states that the form's meaning in Tamasheq, the indigenous language, is *taneghelt*, coming from the verb *enghel*, meaning "to pour." Twenty out of the twenty-one crosses are lost-wax casts, illustrated by a page of photographs in *Art of Being Tuareg*, showing how the wax image is molded (in clay and donkey dung), cast on a charcoal brazier, polished, then engraved.

The metal used in Tuareg jewelry is typically silver, which has been upgraded from nickel or coin silver over the years (at least for the overseas market). Today all the local jewelry is mostly in sterling, though not hallmarked. Identifying the maker is considered less important than in Europe or the U.S.; however, one can often find initials or symbols in Tamasheq (which won't mean much unless one knows the artist).

Today's metalworkers may indeed wonder how Tuareg craftsmen are able to produce such stylish work, with clean, geometric lines and detailed linear engraving, particularly since many smiths work under extremely primitive conditions: sitting low on the ground, often with no running water or electricity, and usually with homemade tools. The first book follows one *inaden* family's progress over the years; they are now able to afford some of the luxuries American and European metal artists take for granted. Probably most other local craftspeople aren't so fortunate.

It is interesting to compare the lives of the *inaden* with their U.S. and European counterparts. Here, anyone can set up a studio, and learn their skills on their own, by taking classes or (if they are lucky) from a family member. Both these books explain that as an *inad* you will be part of a social class whose families and traditions go back many hundreds of years. You must be male: women do leatherwork, but never work in metal. You'll probably start learning your trade at around age seven, and be an expert by the time you're twenty. You will work alongside your extended family, or, increasingly, with a cooperative comprising several families. You won't enjoy the lonely position of studio artist-art jeweler, but as an *inad* inherit the special position of craftsman, negotiator, entertainer, and mystic. You won't be totally trusted, but will be admired and somewhat reluctantly respected. You will also have your own in-house language, a dialect of Tamasheq.

Art of Being Tuareg documents many of the changing roles of the *inaden*, from their traditional role as purveyors of service to the local nobility to broader work for the general public, and now, increasingly, overseas. Niger's recurrent, devastating droughts wiped out many of the livestock that constituted the nobles' traditional wealth. Economic and political insecurity are forcing the *inaden* to develop new markets overseas; a handful of families now send representatives regularly to international fairs and craft shows, sell their work in galleries, and have their own web sites. Much of the new commissioned work, illustrated in the first book, shows how traditional designs are being developed and becoming more sophisticated. But with all this progress, it's still hard for the *inaden* to make a living.

Hopefully Niger, one of the six poorest countries in the world, will restabilize and encourage foreign visitors—including collectors and metal artists. The full story of the wonderful Tuareg *inaden* still has to be written, particularly the details of their casting and engraving techniques, toolmaking, the training of apprentices, and their extended family and cooperative structure. Meanwhile, though flawed, these two books are a good start.

JENNIFER CROSS GANS is a writer and studio artist living in San Francisco.

NAMU CHO

by ELIZABETH MCDEVITT

Set in a deeply wooded area of Bethesda, Maryland, Namu Cho's brick house at first appears to be similar to those of his neighbors. Yet this resemblance stops abruptly at his front door, hand carved with an imposing image of two eagles, the larger one looking outward in a protective pose with a smaller eagle looking inward. This gilded image heralds the powers that await inside.

One senses a strong creative force immediately upon entering. Just beyond the front door, cactus-like metal spikes reach up from a sculpted metal stem, ready to hold guests' coats and other belongings. A narrow hallway leads toward an inner gallery of rooms in which remarkable objects made by both Cho and his wife Jean are integral parts of their living space. Cho has incorporated large antique wooden rice hulling boards brought from his native Korea into furniture-sculptures. One functions as a bench on hand-forged legs with an open, hammered back of patinated copper, resembling abstract human and plant forms with pointed "thorns" that reach out into space. In an adjoining room, a second, more massive board functions as a table. In both pieces, one detects a crucial connection to an ancient past.

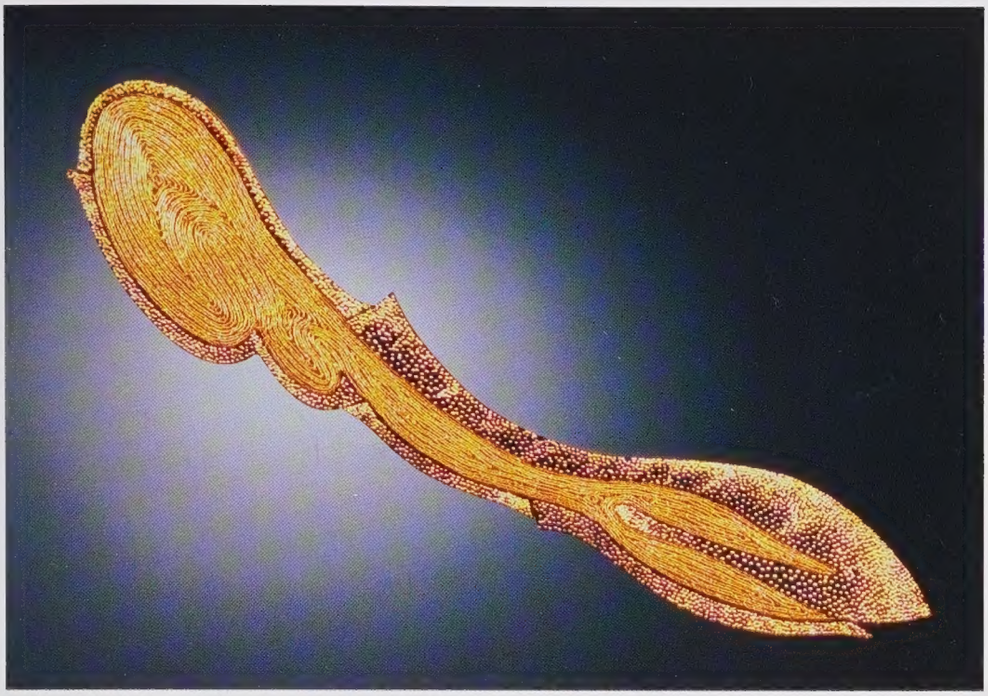
Two large windows frame a private vista of the woods that are an important part of Cho's creative environment. A tall chair rests beside one window, the patina of its hammered copper form resembling wood, the seat honed to fit the contour of the body. A water-tumbled pebble etched with an intricate and mysterious design sits in a reliquary niche in the chair's back. Curved thorn-like spikes reappear in this piece, lining the outer perimeter of the chair, framing the whole. Nature is unmistakably important to Cho. Outside on the windows, two immense yet graceful spiders working busily in their intricate webs have been left undisturbed.

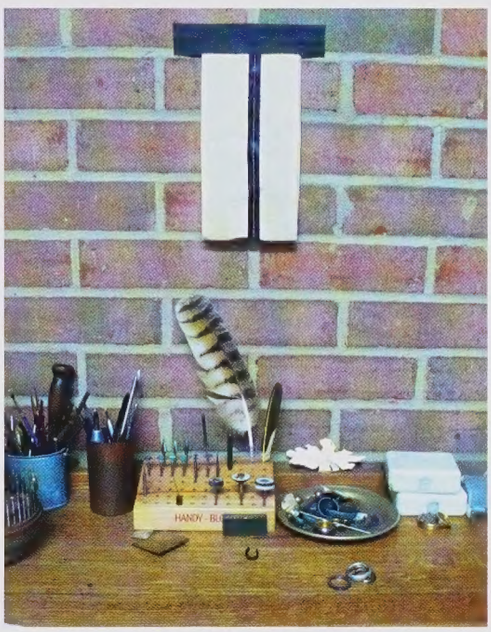
A flight of stairs leads down to Cho's studio, a large bright space with several workbenches and antique chests, in which everything seems to be purposefully placed and well organized. His work area extends on one end to his forging room and to his jewelry studio on the other, where beyond a pair of sliding doors leading outside, he has installed a grinding machine on a cement platform. Cho works in a variety of metals: large-scale pieces of copper, silver, gold, platinum, Damascus steel, and mild steel for the traditional Korean inlay known as *Po-mok saang-gum* (damascene). He makes his own alloys, including traditional alloys such as *O-dong* or *O-Kum* (shibuichi).

Cho's training as both a jeweler and sculptor in Korea and the United States has enabled him to make and alter tools specific to his needs. To achieve the technique of hammering on both a large and small scale common to his work, Cho has a unique variety of tools, from tiny punches and handmade miniature stakes to large texturing tools and one-of-a-kind hammers. Not satisfied with the contours found on commercially available anticlastic raising stakes, he forged his own from a ring mandrel. His favorite tool is a short yet heavy traditional Korean goldsmith's hammer. For crosshatching the mild steel used in his damascene inlay work, Cho has a selection of short, sharp chisels. And to draw fine gold wire down to extremely fine gauge, he has a set of custom-made dies from Korea that go down to a minute opening of 0.12mm. Much of his smaller, jewelry forging work is done on a huge hardwood stump that would make most woodworkers envious. As a nearby drawing table, he has a beautifully finished massive butcher's block, a relic of the days when butchers were considered skilled artisans.

Cho's forging room is for work on a larger scale. Tall stumps with stakes, numerous hammers, and a forge made of carved firebrick fill the room. A rolling mill dedicated to use with red-hot steel stands ready nearby. Cho prefers thin crucibles of fine ceramic from Korea when melting his metals; they heat up more rapidly and allow for greater ease in pouring metal into ingots than do the thicker crucibles available in the U.S.

In a corner of his jewelry studio, a stack of award ribbons, mostly blue, quietly reveals the success that Cho has achieved in the past eleven years since moving to the United States from Korea. Cho has received such prestigious awards as the biennial Tiffany Foundation Award (in 2003) and the Smithsonian Craft Show Excellence Award (in 2004). More prominently and proudly displayed, however, are his nine-year-old son's drawings, as well as a traditional Korean armband above his bench symbolizing respect and mourning for the recent passing of his father.





THERE ARE TWO CONSTANTS THAT CHARACTERIZE CHO'S WORK,...A NEED FOR CONTINUAL CHANGE, AND IN HIS WORDS, "PUSHING HIGHER."

Cho works long hours six days a week, resting on Sundays. Cast bronze fish serve as handles on the dust drawers of his jewelers' benches, reminding him of a favorite pastime, salt water fishing.

Namu Cho sees his work as innovation on traditional techniques, creating a crossover from the traditional style. He is interested in other cultures as well, as a means of understanding his own: "If you don't see others, you don't see yours." His creative time involves a lot of "play." Currently he is experimenting with a traditional Korean textile technique, similar to "couching," a form of patterned embroidery in metal using twisted 24k gold wire sewn to a fine mesh background with extremely fine 22k gold wire.

There are two constants that characterize Cho's work, besides fine craftsmanship and a high level of creativity: a need for continual change, and in his words, "pushing higher." Undoubtedly, in an artist of such uncommon skill and creative breadth, these needs will be admirably met in this environment, perfectly suited to his work.

ELIZABETH MCDEVITT is a goldsmith, teacher, and art historian residing in Colorado Springs.

opposite
Namu Cho at work in his Maryland studio

clockwise from top
Brooch/Pendant, 2003
damascene, embroidery, diamonds, 24k and 22k gold
length 5"
Photo: Hap Sakwa

One of many work tables in Cho's studio

A chair the artist fabricated for his home sits outside his studio

Detail of the artist's jeweler's bench

Studio Photos: Billie Lim

POSSESSED

RIVERS AND STONES

by AKIKO BUSCH

For a period of several years, I found myself preoccupied with swimming across rivers. Whatever divides there were in my life at that time, swimming across rivers spoke to the efforts I was making at breaching them. And so for several summers I swam in rivers as often as I could. It started with swimming across the Hudson River, then the Delaware and the Connecticut, later the Susquehanna, Monongahela, and Cheat, and finally, the Mississippi and the Current River in southeastern Missouri.

During this period of time, I found myself acquiring a collection of rings by the jeweler Gabriella Kiss. She is a neighbor and friend, and so I came to have these rings in that way that such a collection is gathered. Sometimes my husband gave me a ring as a gift. From time to time, Gabriella gave me a ring, once a purple lace agate, another time a milky green moonstone. A dazzling fire opal drop was given to me by a friend at dinner one evening when I admired it on *her* finger. And sometimes, too, I would come upon a ring in Gabriella's studio, and a sense of urgency would compel me to buy it. And during that period, as I swam across one river and then another, all the while collecting this ring and that, I began to associate the rings with the rivers.

As a writer, I have always been interested in the way physical artifacts come to represent and reflect human experience. Logic, I have noticed, vanishes in the process. Landscape and time can collapse in on themselves. Part of the beauty of these rings lies in their simplicity. Their simple bezel set, sometimes delicately scalloped, was inspired by the jewelry in sixteenth-century Flemish paintings. Five hundred years later and a continent away, the beauty and economy of such a setting has not diminished.

There is no geological accuracy that links any of these rings to any of these rivers. The origins of a bezel-set emerald are not in the turbid, grey-green waters of the Hudson River, but in a mine in Colombia, yet the four times I swam across the Hudson River, it was essential that I wear the emerald; in its own way, the ring belonged to the river, and the river to the ring. And the cloudy green moonstone was quarried not anywhere near the Connecticut River, but in Sri Lanka; still, it has come to evoke that soft, languid river. A tiny blue star sapphire from a seam of the earth in Thailand was able to speak to the elusive character of the subaquatic Delaware.

The Hudson River, I learned early on, is a river that flows both ways. Equipped with a tide, it is an estuary as well as a river, and sometimes it flows to the north, sometimes to the south. Swimming in the Hudson was a lesson in order, and how a sense of order is sometimes established when people and things do exactly the opposite of what you would expect. And so it was with these rings as well. It's a funny thing about stones. The conventional wisdom is that they weigh you down. But as sometimes happens with physical objects, use and function can be turned on their heads, and just as a river is capable of changing its direction, so this collection of stones came to confer a sense of lightness, a sense of buoyancy even.

I know that people who are given to regular sports are given as well to ritual, and often to the ritualistic obsession with gear: a pair of shoes that is sure to carry you across the track at utmost speed or a special shirt that enables you to traverse the rock face. All of these stones became my essential accessories. In much the way some swimmers depend upon a particular pair of goggles or fins, I came to rely upon a small star sapphire, a blue chalcedony, an emerald, all of these the talismans that would carry me safely from one shore to the other.

"All stones come from the constant heat and pressure of the earth," Gabriella told me once. When I heard those words, I knew that part of the satisfaction in wearing these rings into the rivers came from knowing how these bright stones taken from veins found deep in the ground could now coincide with the fluid arteries that stream across its surface; and from the idea that something so enduring as a stone can begin as a liquid or a gas, a bubble, a stream of heat, some disturbance miles beneath the earth's facade. For all the discipline, design, and craft with which these rings are made, they also speak to the notion that beauty is random and improvisational. By that time there were nine rivers and twelve rings.

And wearing these rings together as I tend to do, it is possible to believe that these rivers are congregating on my hands just as surely and swiftly as they do in my own recall; that the light and polish of these stones can speak to the dazzling variations of taste and texture and color and light that I found in all these rivers. When the glint of an andalucite faceted garnet

IT IS POSSIBLE FOR THIS HANDFUL OF STONES TO SPEAK TO ALL THOSE WAYS WE FIND TO DISTILL HUMAN EXPERIENCE; TO FIND A WAY TO CARRY IT WITH US.

casts a sliver of light on a sapphire drop, it occurs to me that the curious geography of human imagination is a waterway where it is possible for the Hudson and the Connecticut to momentarily converge. Where beauty and memory coincide is a haphazard geoscience of its own.

When I look at all these rings on my fingers now, I think of those rivers. The fissure in the flash of white sapphire carries something of the clarity in the Current River; the dusty gray of the blue chalcedony holds some particle of the Hudson; and the radiant graphics of a dendritic quartz, seeming vestiges of some ancient moss, evoke that confluence where the northern and western branches of the Susquehanna coincide. It is possible for this handful of stones to speak to all those ways we find to distill human experience; to find a way to carry it with us. It is possible also to think I am wearing bits of those waters. Most of all, it is possible for me to believe now that those rivers are something I can hold onto with my own two hands.

AKIKO BUSCH'S most recent book of essays is *Nine Ways to Cross a River: Midstream Reflections on Swimming and Getting There from Here*, published by Bloomsbury/USA in 2007. She lives in the Hudson Valley.

opposite
GABRIELLA KISS
Hand Earrings, 1984
silver, crystal drops

above
Akiko Busch wearing 18k gold medieval stacking rings by GABRIELLA KISS from her collection
top hand, from left: dendritic quartz, purple lace agate, emerald, sapphire, moonstone, blue chalcedony
bottom hand: sapphire, citrine, fire opal, tourmaline, tree carved in green tourmaline, ceylon moonstone
Photo: Gabriella Kiss

by MIJA RIEDEL

CICADA LARVAE DREAMS AND OTHER STORIES

THE WORK OF MARIKO KUSUMOTO

History, performance, and a paradoxical pattern of restraint inform Mariko Kusumoto's multi-layered assemblages. Drawing on the work of the surrealists, the short films of the Brothers Quay, the cultural icons of Edo- and Meiji-period Japan, and the simple mechanics of pop-up books, Kusumoto constructs miniature worlds in metal boxes. Sparse meets dense. Refined meets kitsch. East mingles with West. The subtle principles of Japanese aesthetics, *wabi-sabi* and *shibui*, present themselves in Kusumoto's predilection for the random, for quiet surprises, and for the intentionally incomplete.

Kusumoto was born in Japan on the southern island of Kyushu. Her father was a Buddhist priest, and she grew up in a 400-year-old temple. "Everything that was around me had some history," Kusumoto said. "As a child, I sensed the old things had more value than brand new things."[1] She spent much of her childhood in the temple, polishing metal ornaments and statues, and in the garden, amidst weathered stone Buddhas and aging wooden sculptures. She played with plants and insects, and in particular, cicadas. Elaborate structures in the temple graveyard served as her playhouse.

Kaiten Zushi, 2004
copper, brass, sterling silver, nickel silver, bronze, found objects, acrylic paint, enamel, 24k gold leaf
13 x 12 x 12"

Kaiten Zushi, 2004 (detail)
Photos: M. Lee Fatherree

回転寿司

LEAVING THINGS TO THE VIEWER IS A DISCIPLINE THAT KUSUMOTO HAS ACTIVELY DEVELOPED OVER YEARS. "INCOMPLETE BEAUTY IS A CHARACTERISTIC OF THE JAPANESE AESTHETIC."

Kusumoto studied oil painting and printmaking at college in Tokyo, and received an MFA in printmaking from the Academy of Art College in San Francisco in 1995. She currently lives and maintains a studio—part inventor's laboratory, part research library—in Lexington, Massachusetts. Beside hundreds of books about surrealism, Victorian vignettes, Japanese design, and Edo-period artists hang compartmentalized wall cases framing antique watches, gaming pieces, and insect exoskeletons floating in blocks of resin. Amidst electroformed octopus tentacles and crabs, textiles and sheets of paper (with patterns ranging from birds and botanicals to teeth and Warhol portraits), Kusumoto keeps a collection of cheap plastic toys—a spinning seal, a crawling inchworm, a lumbering monkey—that she studies, dissects, and adapts in order to propel unique performances of her own devising.

Kusumoto's inclination toward performance and her fascination with treasure boxes and simple mechanisms (music boxes, pocket watches with flip lids) surface in even her earliest works. A sense of mystery informs *Altar I* (1995), *Mother's Room* (1995), and *Father's Room* (1996). Their interiors can only be glimpsed, through screens of stylized lotus blossoms or thickets of patinaed copper twigs. The viewer must take an active role in their unveiling. In keeping with the spirit of *wabi-sabi*, described by Leonard Koren in his multiple books regarding Japanese design and aesthetics as "a beauty of things imperfect... incomplete... unconventional,"[2] Kusumoto's boxes are small, compact and inward-oriented: "they beckon: get close, touch, relate.... [They're] private environments that enhance one's capacity for metaphysical musings."[3] In Kusumoto's curious territories, there are doors to be opened, switches to be flicked, cranks to be turned, and in the case of *Game of Chance I* and *II* (both 1997), pinball games to be played. Her worlds are inhabited by hybrid creatures that crawl, creep, and pirouette around the stage, through circus tents, and out of lotus pods. Simple tunes accompany many of the earliest works, dissonant compositions that have more in common with improvisational jazz, or the soundtrack to the stop-motion animators Brothers Quay's *Street of Crocodiles* than music box lullabies.

Pattern and texture are also omnipresent. Like strips in a metal quilt, rows of abstract flowers, raindrops on a pond, and fragments of compass roses abut each other. "Good patterns are simple," wrote Soetsu Yanagi in his (and Bernard Leach's) *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight into Beauty*; "if they are cluttered they are not yet patterns."[4] A good pattern, he continued, is an exaggeration of beauty found in nature. It isn't a literal depiction. As a distortion of beauty, it often includes an element of the grotesque. A good pattern, Yanagi concluded, "does not explain; it leaves things to the viewer."

Leaving things to the viewer is a discipline that Kusumoto has actively developed over years. "Incomplete beauty is a characteristic of the Japanese aesthetic," she said recently. "I think that, mentally, incomplete things have a lot of space. That stimulates our imagination. Imagination completes the object in our mind, by compensating for the missing part. This kind of mental activity becomes amusement and is tasteful"—the kind of refined and subtle taste that Koren refers to as *wabi-sabi*.

Through Kusumoto's singular interpretations of incomplete beauty—at once dense and indirect—runs a thread of would-be scientific inquiry. It informs *Kisekae Doll I* and *II* (1998), Kusumoto's three-dimensional, metal variations on paper dolls, which are housed in wood and glass cases reminiscent of specimen boxes. In *Kisekae Doll II*, the dolls and their territory are fully visible beneath a glass cover. Western and Japanese garments, and various trinkets—pinwheels, a rocket, a fish purse, a pet insect—are arranged in precise, cut-to-fit niches. In a moment's time, a doll can transform from traditional Japanese (kimono, obi) to stylized American (sundress, blonde flip). "I realize now," Kusumoto said recently of these works, "that I was focusing on figuring out my identity."

Insects also appear in Kusumoto's work at regular intervals. *Cicada Larvae Dreams* (1998), her first piece with multiple compartments, evokes not only specimen boxes but curio cabinets, carrying cases, early apartment complexes, and netherworld beehives. Each of its nine chambers holds a cicada on wheels—some with human faces, some with human riders. "Cicadas stay in

the ground for many years," said Kusumoto. "Once they become adults, they live only seven days. I was interested in their ironic and tragic life story." This egalitarian lens—which makes little distinction between pupating insects with human faces and multicultural paper dolls—may account for the seemingly detached, even-handed sense of observation that pervades Kusumoto's work. Nothing—bug, blowfish, balloon, or baby—seems more deserving of our attention than anything else. Each is newly relevant as it relates to its immediate, and most likely atypical, surroundings.

Following *Cicada Larvae Dreams*, compartments appeared again in *Memory Set* (1999), enhancing a sense of separation between present and past. *Memory Set* was inspired by *dagashiya*, a kind of store that sells inexpensive candy, games, and stationery that has existed in Japan for over 100 years and is now disappearing. Children could socialize for hours, in these environments designed specifically for them. "All the attractive toys, sweets, and games," said Kusumoto, "were displayed in different kinds of big glass jars, and glass cases with wooden frames hanging on the wall or from the ceiling. The wall cases made them look even more attractive and mysterious. I liked the crowdedness."

Kusumoto's discovery of resin enabled her fabrication of *Memory Set*. Resin allowed her, she explained, "to stop time—capture time—and make it solid." She could cast ephemeral cicada shells, and antique objects she had discovered at flea markets during her annual visits to Japan. She could construct layers of imagery in transparent time capsules. The outermost objects stay clear, she wrote, "but the deeper ones get progressively foggier. It's like memory, dreamlike and ambiguous."

Over the years, other technical advancements have served the evolution of Kusumoto's work. *Daughter's Room* (2002), *Tansu no Oku* (Inside Tansu, 2002), and *Bloomingdales* (2007) have their structural foundations in pop-up books. Their essence lies in their multiple dimensions—layers of human anatomy, drawers in a tansu, floors in a department store—which unfold toward various versions of an inner sanctum. *Iroha Uta* (Alphabet Song, 2003) was the first piece Kusumoto built after she devised a method—through Photoshop, photocopying, and transparent decals—for transferring images onto metal. The variety, density, and complexity of her imagery increased immediately. Color arrived in her work in earnest. Kusumoto now could scan any image in the public domain—surrealist drawings, hand-tinted photographs, old advertisements and catalogs, Edo- and Meiji-period woodblock prints—and fuse it to metal.

Woodblock prints from Meiji-era Japan (1868–1912), a period of rapid growth and extreme contrasts that commenced when the country opened its doors to Western culture and influence after a prolonged period of isolation, are of particular interest to Kusumoto.

opposite
Kisekae Doll II (wearable doll with changeable clothes), 1998
copper, bronze, brass, sterling silver, nickel silver wood, rice paper, coral
3 1/4 x 16 3/4 x 9 1/4"
Photo: M. Lee Fatherree

above
Cicada Larvae Dreams (brooches), 1998
bronze, brass, sterling silver, nickel silver, wood, found objects
open 8 1/4 x 15 1/2 x 2"
Photo: M. Lee Fatherree

THE RESTRAINED, DARK EXTERIOR CONTRASTS DRAMATICALLY WITH THE DENSE, BRIGHTLY COLORED INTERIORS.

In these prints, "both kites and balloons are flying in the sky. People are wearing Western clothes, but their faces are still depicted in the traditional *Ukiyo-e* style. I like this strange mixture of two extremely different cultures."

Kusumoto is drawn also to the exaggerated, surreal colors of Meiji-period photos. Just as a good pattern achieves, in Soetsu Yanagi's words, "a verity that transcends realism,"[5] Kusumoto finds hand-tinted Meiji-period photos "more vivid than reality," she said. "Modern color photos can never express the same effect. Sometimes in my work I convert color photos to black and white, and then tint them in Photoshop, trying to achieve this effect."

Iroha Uta contains 21 compartments, each with a door bearing a character from the old Japanese alphabet. The restrained, dark exterior contrasts dramatically with the dense, brightly colored interiors. In one compartment, a cast Buddha nests in a lotus flower, beams of light radiating out from behind his head. In an adjacent room, a similar circle of light beams hangs above a pool of lotus blossoms, between a rainbow and a miniature image of Mount Fuji, creating a picture that's equally Meiji-period Japan and '60s Haight Ashbury. Below the lotus pond, from a sea of waves expropriated from an Edo-period woodblock print by Katsushika Hokusai, a fish leaps forward—Kusumoto's latest twist on pop-up book technology. Nearby, a lobster scrambles to escape a giant chopstick, its flapping motion and sparse, discordant soundtrack both the result of its tiny, music box armature.

Over the past 12 years, theater, the circus, and various types of performance have become increasingly prominent in Kusumoto's work. *Stage of Life* (1999) was the first piece to include lights, music, a stage, and a twirling, magnetically propelled robot. In *Sideshow* (2003), multiple acts occur simultaneously. A dozen butterflies unfold in a pair of hands; a bird bearing human passengers in a secret compartment rolls by on wheels; as music plays, wings flutter from the side of an insect woman's head. Kusumoto has become increasingly adept at deconstructing music boxes in order to create atonal accompaniment for her performances. "Music boxes have happy songs," she said, "but I prefer more mysterious sounds. By playing the music over and over, I figure out which pins play the notes I don't like, and I file them off. After I repeated this process, there were random silences, and I liked the effect."

Japanese history and cultural traditions inform performance in *Hinamatsuri* (2001), *Kaiten Zushi* (2004), and *Shizuoka Ekiben* (2006). Inspired by an annual Japanese holiday celebrating daughters, Kusumoto constructed her own version of a traditional doll tea service in *Hinamatsuri* (Girl's Day, or Doll Festival). Unlike the majority of antique sets fabricated from clay and cloth, and

passed down from one generation to the next, Kusumoto built hers from copper and nickel silver. She placed her emperor and empress at the top level of a five-tiered throne, and to the usual accoutrements—tansu, flowers, a birdcage—she added skulls, a pinwheel, and a surrealist pair of glasses complete with eyes. *Hinamatsuri* represented a new level of complexity in Kusumoto's work, which far surpassed anything she had done previously.

Shizuoka Ekiben and *Kaiten Zushi* reference Japanese cultural traditions—the tea ceremony, and the rituals inseparable from Japanese cuisine, respectively—while offering increased possibilities for the audience to participate. *Kaiten Zushi* (Rotate Sushi), built to resemble an old-style, two-story Japanese restaurant, requires active viewers. A "presenter" sits behind the restaurant, unpacking miniature metal bento boxes filled with precise arrangements of cast and electroformed sushi, decorative utensils, and elaborate garnishes. He selects for his "customer" various courses—a piece of *tamago*, a slice of *maguro*, a blowfish on wheels. Each is presented one at a time as the performance continues within. Inside the *edamame* pod, nickel silver faces nest where there should be soybeans. Inside the *tako* sushi, a human baby bobs in elaborate waves of octopus tentacles.

Kaiten Zushi contains dozens of elements with unique patterns and textures, and many with secret compartments as well. All fit into elaborately patterned bento boxes reminiscent of the exquisite lacquerware containers made in Japan between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries by highly skilled artisans. "The craftsmen," Kusumoto said, "strove to create beauty in a limited space. I've seen elaborate lunch boxes from the Edo period, and containers for writing utensils, cosmetics, games, incense, even a picnic set including food, plates, a hand drum, and sake. The contents are arranged inside by section dividers, or by smaller boxes inside the main box. Everything is well organized and compact. In our modern society, plastic and paper have taken the place of Japanese lacquer, but I believe the sense of meticulously arranged containers still remains in Japanese package design today." Kusumoto has studied Edo-period boxes, but her own inclination toward carefully ordered compartments is more instinctive. "I have strong memories of making 3-D pieces when I was in kindergarten. I made different colored sweets from origami and displayed them in a box. I remember it so clearly because I was so excited."

Kusumoto's teapot-shaped metal "picnic basket," *Shizuoka Ekiben*, was designed with an eye to the city of Shizuoka, famous for its green tea. Japanese train stations are known for their *ekiben*, local delicacies presented in beautifully composed boxes. Inside Kusumoto's teapot, one finds everything needed for a picnic—sushi, sake, chopsticks—along with what Kusumoto deems the requisite number of surprises. Tip *Shizuoka Ekiben*, and stylized Hokusai waves pour from the spout. The clasp at top is Buddha's head. During a visit to Kyushu, Kusumoto selected one Buddha from the countless inexpensive statues that fill her father's temple. "When the followers buy a new one," she explained, "they don't want to throw the old one in the trash, so they bring it to our temple." Back in the States, she gently removed the head and sent it to be cast.

Performance peaks in *Byobu* (Folding Screen, 2004–06). Two years in the making, it involves close to 100 magnetic characters, props, and backdrops that can be affixed to a vertical screen in an almost endless variety of theatrical tableaux: a geisha fights her way

opposite
Iroha Uta, 2003
copper, nickel silver, brass, bronze, sterling silver, rice paper, 24k gold leaf, resin, ruby, thread
open 12 x 20 x 2"
Photo: M. Lee Fatherree

above, left and right
Shizuoka Ekiben, 2006
copper, brass, nickel silver, sterling silver, glass resin, fabric, acrylic paint, magnet, decal
open 24 x 13 x 2"
Photo: Dean Powell

Shizuoka Ekiben (detail)

"WHEN ARTWORK IS TOO CONTROLLED, HARMONIZED, EXPECTED, AND EVERYTHING IS IN ORDER," KUSUMOTO SAID, "IT'S BORING."

through clouds of butterflies; beside the sand circles of a formal Japanese garden, a rooster peers at a disembodied, sleeping head surrounded by hot air balloons; seven tiny faces spill out of a cracked pomegranate and wash down a waterfall into an outstretched hand. More than any of Kusumoto's other pieces, *Byobu* embodies the Japanese aesthetic principle of "leaving things incomplete." It's up to the viewer to juxtapose images—abstract, iconic, and others drawn from nature—until a particular composition resonates. In the process, the viewer becomes collaborator. He helps to compose a work of art, and an aspect of *shibui* described by philosopher Soetsu Yanagi, that leads "the viewer to draw beauty out of it for himself. In this sense, *shibui* beauty...makes an artist of the viewer."[6]

Byobu laid the groundwork for Kusumoto's most densely layered and elaborate work yet. *Ryounkaku* (2006) is a fusion of architectural history, shopping, and *sugoroku* (a Japanese board game dating back hundreds of years). It was inspired by 1890 Tokyo's sole skyscraper, also called Ryounkaku, a twelve-story department store filled primarily with international knickknacks. The facade of Kusumoto's vertical board game resembles an apartment building, its 42 windows filled with children blowing bubbles, celebrating birthdays, or studying life on the windowsill through a magnifying glass. Behind the windows are rooms, some of which contain fairly straightforward shops—a wig store, a bird emporium, a Japanese restaurant; others more surreal versions of the circus, a writer's study, a man-eating giant octopus; others still more fantastical assemblages that read like fragments of dreams involving trains, maps, samurai, dancing dogs, and Salvador Dalí.

Kusumoto worked on dozens, sometimes hundreds of separate pieces at once—never quite sure how the final piece would look. "When artwork is too controlled, harmonized, expected, and everything is in order," Kusumoto said, "it's boring."

Players roll the dice, and advance upward. Landing in a room of kimono-clad women meditating before the solar system means you must meditate too—lose one turn. Landing in the restaurant means you lose another turn, but you may attach your favorite slice of sushi to your game piece. Victorian dolls bobbing in a sea of Edo-period waves signal, "You're washed down the drain—go back to start." The winner is he who first arrives at the penthouse, where a geisha—hiding behind a nosegay of violets—shouts "GOAL!" through a stylized megaphone. "I'm always looking for something," Kusumoto said, "that I've never seen before."

Kusumoto's most recent piece, *Bloomingdales*, is a highly evolved version of a pop-up book. Like the elaborate, Edo-period containers, *Bloomingdales* reflects the Japanese love of meticulously ordered boxes and cleverly layered packaging. "Even

if it is only a single rice cracker, it is carefully wrapped," Kusumoto said. "People buy not only the product; they buy the package design. The act of unwrapping it is part of the pleasure."

Bloomingdales was inspired by an illustrated catalog from 1886 containing hundreds of detailed drawings of clothing, corsets, and shoes for sale. Like *Daughter's Room, Bloomingdales* unfolds as one moves through multiple levels toward an inner sanctum. The densely etched exterior, depicting the outside of a department store, feels positively restrained in comparison with the layers that unfold inside—metal pages bearing images of lace collars, crystal carafes, perfume atomizers, fish, birds, and heads of cabbage. It is this paradox in Kusumoto's work—in the midst of multiple layers of dense and diverse iconic imagery, a sense of stillness and similitude emerges—that actively engages the viewer's imagination long after he has finished interacting with her work.

Bloomingdales is the first piece Kusumoto has made that doesn't include Japanese imagery. "Whenever Western people make a piece about my culture, I always notice something's not quite right. Very subtle—but I can tell it wasn't made by someone Japanese. I was so curious—if I made something 100 percent Western, would people notice I'm from a different culture?" At *Bloomingdales's* center, Kusumoto placed a three-dimensional chest of drawers on wheels, and inside each of the five drawers, she placed a brooch: surrealist portraits, a Victorian vignette, a bird woman wearing a dress from the Bloomingdales catalog. While the images in *Bloomingdales* are purely Western, the structure reflects a very Japanese sensibility of layered, highly ordered beauty composed in limited space. Like many of Kusumoto's pieces, *Bloomingdales* also embodies a broader multicultural reference to treasure boxes, hidden prizes, and the pleasure of the quest.

With the recent completion of these especially dense works, Kusumoto is considering moving beyond the box. She has become increasingly intrigued by mobiles, both ceiling- and wall-mounted. As objects, they're well suited to images and layers. They represent entirely new types of mechanisms, and movement. They inherently encompass large tracts of open space. This combination of volume and emptiness signals the arrival of a third element that intrigues Kusumoto both formally and figuratively: shadows. They're continually in flux; they simultaneously embody presence and absence. They contain what Koren describes as a kind of nothingness that, unlike the Western concept of empty space, "is alive with possibility."[7]

"To Western artists," Kusumoto said, "especially in painting and drawing (and much sculpture), there is a tendency to 'fill up' every area in the picture plane; the idea being that if you don't fill a black or neutral area, then the artwork is incomplete.... Minimalism is one of the characteristics of Japanese culture. We have a concept that 'less is more,' and negative space is not negative space."

MIJA RIEDEL, a San Francisco–based writer, is currently working on a series of interviews for the Archives of American Art.

1 Mariko Kusumoto, personal communication. All quotes from the artist are taken from interviews and correspondence dating from July through September 2007.
2 Leonard Koren, *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 1994), p. 7.
3 Koren, p. 67.
4 Soetsu Yanagi and Bernard Leach, *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight into Beauty* (Tokyo and New York: Kodansha International Ltd., 1972), pp. 114–115.
5 Yanagi, p. 115.
6 Ibid, p. 124.
7 Koren.

opposite page
Byobu, 2005
copper, brass, nickel silver, sterling silver, magnet, decal
open 15 x 30 x 9 1/2"
Photo: M. Lee Fatherree

Byobu, 2005 (interior box)
Photo: M. Lee Fatherree

above left
Ryounkaku, 2006
copper, brass, nickel silver, magnet, decal
closed 27 x 9 x 1 1/2"; open 27 x 9 x 4"
Photo: Dean Powell

by LIESBETH DEN BESTEN

PETER CHANG

PLASTIC JEWELRY AND THE JOY OF MEANINGFUL CHANCE

The jewelry of British artist Peter Chang is known all over the world—but it's not your typical jewelry. The size, sculptural character, color, and flamboyance are too extreme for many; others, however, are attracted by the same qualities. These sculptural pieces are usually worn by self-confident women, who are not afraid to attract attention. They appear "dressed" in a Peter Chang, prepared for any encounter. But why is Chang only working in plastic? Where do these forms come from, and how does his work relate to developments in international jewelry?

Chang has been making the most extraordinary jewelry out of ordinary plastic for decades. For Chang, the material possesses exactly the right characteristics: it is readily available; it is malleable; and it is manufactured in a wide range of colors. Chang proves that plastic is far from worthless; on the contrary, the material stirs his fantasy, and enables him to reach the highest freedom of form, color, and movement.

Chang was born in 1944 as the son of a Chinese seaman and a British mother, and grew up in Liverpool. His prospects as the son of an immigrant were not brilliant; yet his talent was recognized early. At the age of 13, he won a scholarship that enabled him to go to the Liverpool Secondary School of Art. After graduating he studied graphic design and sculpture at the Liverpool College of Art.

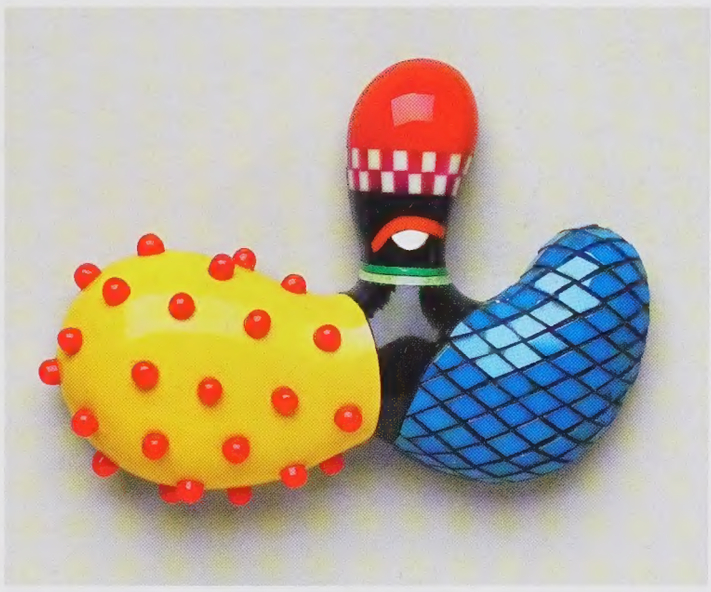
Bracelet, 2004
acrylic, polyester, PVC, silver dimens
Collection of Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

"THROUGH MY PERSONAL RESEARCHES INTO DUALITY AND THE WESTERN VIEW OF CONTRASTS," SAYS CHANG, "I EXPLORED THE CHINESE YIN/YANG THEORY WHERE THE TWO ELEMENTS MAY CLASH, BUT ALSO HAVE A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP. HERE, UNLIKE THE WESTERN AIM OF DOMINATION, ONE CANNOT EXIST WITHOUT THE OTHER."

In 1967, Chang went to Paris on a scholarship to work in Atelier 17, the studio of S.W. Hayter. Here he encountered the art of the Surrealists and expressionists, like Miro, Picasso, and Giacometti. Hayter, a British etcher who had been living in Paris for many years, used a special printing technique for which he developed inks with certain oils. He made use of different levels of the printing plate, of the viscosity of the oil, and the various hardnesses of the rubber surface of the rollers. In this way he could make undulating levels with intaglio lines. Chang loved this kind of printmaking, which could attain hundreds of different colors. In 1968 he was admitted to the Slade School of Fine Arts in London to do a postgraduate in printmaking and sculpture.

That both printmaking and sculpture form the basis of Chang's artistic language is one of the keys to his work. In 1967, while studying printing techniques in Paris, he carved a small organic form from ebony, to be held in the hand in a pocket. Around 1970 he made two small cubes from laminated acrylic, one of which was elaborated with a pattern of deep lines that Chang had cut into the material with a specially made tool. While this cube showed a graphic touch, Chang's etchings of the same period became more sculptural; he had discovered that plate making was related to sculpture. A round etching plate from this period is a sculpture in itself; it is treated with a pattern of deep lines in two cutting circles, and reveals his interest in three-dimensional effects. His plastic sculptures and wall reliefs from 1966 onwards show geometric forms and curved surfaces, often more than life-size, and seem to reference the Modernist formalist tradition without ever being severe or purist. They have a playful and highly personal character, partly due to their lively colors or their strange bulging forms. It is clear that Chang derives inspiration from sources other than Modernism.

Chang recently spoke about the importance of having a Chinese Shanghai background while living in a Western society: "I am half Chinese, but when I was a child I was seen as Chinese. In the '50s other Chinese people came to England, the Cantonese and Hakka, and I began questioning my Chinese identity. Yes, I was able to count to ten in Chinese, but I couldn't communicate with these people. Gradually I became interested in Chinese philosophy, in I Ching, but also in Jung, Max Ernst, and mythological figures like chimeras. All along through history people have made myths from this fusion of contrasts of good versus evil."[1] A wall relief of 1966 is



a shiny blue circle within which a smaller square is suggested, consisting of nine protuberances in the convex surface. Of the piece Chang wrote: 'Through my personal researches into duality and the Western view of contrasts, for example, the deadly clash of 'good versus evil,' I explored the Chinese yin/yang theory where the two elements may clash, but also have a symbiotic relationship. Here, unlike the Western aim of domination, one cannot exist without the other."[2] Chang's reliefs may have appealed to contemporary jewelers like the Dutch Gijs Bakker and Emmy van Leersum, who were influenced by Constructivism and Minimal Art, yet his approach differed fundamentally. His work is not dealing with the dry and rationalistic redefinition of Western art. This abstract sculpture shows that imagery is his most important aim, by interpreting the circle and square as symbols of two opposed forces. Already in these early works it is clear that Chang's bicultural background is a powerful motive.

Chang made his first jewelry at age 14 or 15: "I used a 9 carat golden signet ring which had lost its diamond, and shaped the head of a drawing pin, the shaft of which protruded through the hole where the diamond was," he said. "It was a customized jewel. In the Liverpool immigrants area where I lived were many racial gangs." For the first time Chang explored the defensive or even offensive value of a jewel—a quality which can be found in his later jewelry in a sublimated form.

opposite
Wall Relief, 1966
masonite, timber, PVC
diameter 36"

clockwise from above
Bracelet, 1997
acrylic, polyester, PVC, found objects, silver
diameter 7 1/2"
Collection of Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum

Brooch, 1985
acrylic, PVC
3 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 1"

Pepper Mill, 1992
acrylic, resin
height 19"

Like many fine artists (Alexander Calder, Pablo Picasso, to name two) Chang initially started making jewelry for his wife. It was 1984, and Chang was alone at home during the week with a small child and rebuilding the house, while his wife Barbara Santos-Shaw was teaching at the Glasgow School of Art. He collected waste pieces from a local sign writer in Chinatown who worked with acrylic. The colors were limited, thanks to the selected palette of the sign writer, which was adjusted to Western taste. Red and yellow were especially popular, and thus are prevalent in Chang's early jewelry. He also used broken toys, disposable razor handles, toothbrushes, and felt-tip pen tubes. It was an early form of recycling. Chang made his own tools to work the material. He attributes his love of reusing and repurposing existing materials to his non-Western background.

Chang's sketches are his point of departure, but they aren't the actual designs. What works in two-dimensional drawings doesn't always succeed in three dimensions. The jewels all have a core of polyurethane foam, carved to shape. The shapes are covered with a polyester resin reinforced with glass fiber strands. The top layers consist of acrylic, which is heated to mold. The acrylic may be cut away, and different materials can be added, such as glitter, car glass, pieces of mirror, silver, or gold. The pieces are finished with intensive sanding and polishing and a transparent layer of varnish. Chang uses wood as the basic material for the smaller objects, such as the brooches and earrings, and for the hollow and drape forms of the bracelets. This material is first cut in the right shape and then the heated plastic is molded onto it with the aid of a self-made press.

The process is not only unhealthy, it is also very time-consuming. It can easily take weeks or months, even years, to finish one piece. In a short statement under the heading "It's only Plastic," Chang writes about his materials, which are considered worthless by many people: "It is the joy of exploring their qualities of malleability, creating color and sensuality, teasing the materials to obey,

PLASTIC AS SUCH MIGHT BE A MATERIAL WITH LITTLE HISTORY, APPEAL, OR VALUE, YET BY WORKING IT PROFOUNDLY, IT IS CHARGED WITH ENERGY, IMAGERY, AND A VALUE THAT IS NOT INTRINSIC BUT ARTISTIC.

exploiting all to the maximum, which gives it value to me, to previous practitioners, and to the increasing number of artists and craftsmen who love to create through it."[3] Plastic as such might be a material with little history, appeal, or value, yet by working it profoundly, it is charged with energy, imagery, and a value that is not intrinsic but artistic.

For his first jewels, in the mid 1980s, Chang used little pieces of mosaic, while the constructions were still rather simple, divided in equal compartments. From the '90s on, he worked with resin, using techniques similar to that of mixing oil to ink in his earlier etching printing processes and to traditional Chinese lacquer work techniques. By applying layer upon layer of resin, he not only succeeded in varying the colors but also controlled the tones. When the material is sanded and polished, the varied layers are exposed; this process strongly appeals to Chang, because it is full of surprise and mystery. The good observer will discover the liveliness of his materials, the vibrant colors, the oily effects, the spectrum of tones in one color, from pale to deep and warm, and the soft, sensual rounded forms, or the prickly, sometimes even aggressive ones. Every bracelet, every jewel, is a new adventure and is therefore unique. Chang can't repeat himself, which makes commissioned work a tricky business. Clients can order a certain bracelet, but no two are the same.

Over the decades, Chang's work evolved quite steadily, jewelry besides objects, working with recurring themes, but not in series or in a linear progression. A theme may recur after many years. It is a Chinese way of conceiving things; Chang's ideas evolve not in a sequential way but in a spiral way, he explains. And he loves "meaningful chance."

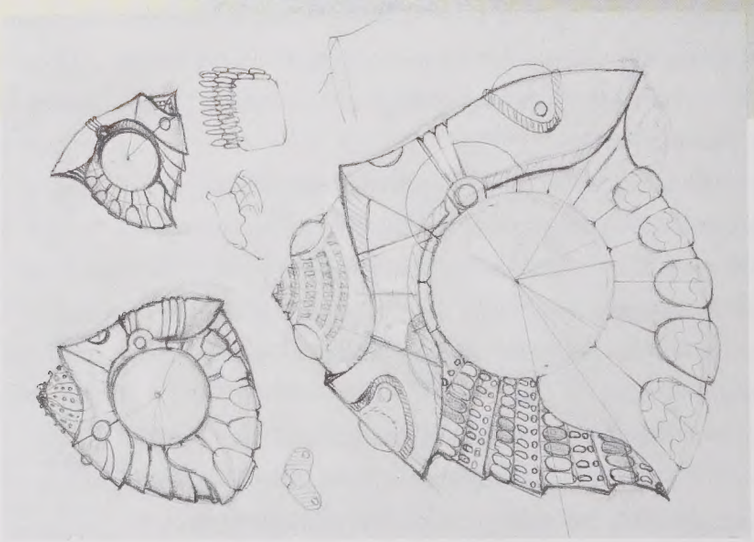
From the moment Peter Chang started making jewelry, predominantly bracelets and brooches, his star rose quickly. He found recognition in the jewelry community, although he kept on making sculptures and functional objects as well. In 1988, he had a solo exhibition at the Gallery Ra in Amsterdam; a review in a local paper stated: "In his breach with the right, serious line, Chang is still standing alone. If you have a look at the permanent collection of Gallery Ra, you will notice that even the younger jewelers still prefer plain, modest forms."[4] Though the article shows that the "New Jewelry" is still in the air at this time, the reviewer was apparently unaware that Chang's work was never determined by dogmatic principles of form.

Look closely at Chang's pieces to discover his very own world: fish mouths, helmets, snakes, flames, dragons, cactuses, cells, soles of sport shoes, parasites, city maps, fins, car lights, flowers, the human skull, erotic seducers, male armored figures, flashy high-speed streamlined vehicles, threatening insects or crabs, poisonous colors, pointing claws and spines. The artist draws inspiration from nature and from man-made constructions. Chang's recent works reconcile organic and mechanical forms, as seen in *German Bracelet* (2006), which consists of different parts that seem to fit into one another, like a crustacean in its shell. Besides this reference to sea life, there is a smooth streamlined metallic part that might be called a "scooter" or "motorbike," a speckled scarlet part that seems to imitate a reptile, and a triumphant flowerlike element which bursts through two sensual red lips. The smallest part of the bracelet is covered with blue mosaic pieces, like scales. Yet to dissect a Chang bracelet like this is unfair to the overall impression, because all the different elements are merged into one strong sculptural object. Each of his pieces, whether jewelry or object, is an independent phantasmagorical character. If there is a meaning in these objects, it must be in the response of the observer. The fact

opposite, clockwise from top
Bracelet, 2002
acrylic, resin
diameter 6 5/8"

Sculpture, 2000
acrylic, resin
11 x 14 x 12"

Brooch, 2003
acrylic, resin
height 4 3/4"



"THE PIECES I CREATE CAN BE SCULPTURES OR THEY CAN BE WORN AS JEWELRY. EACH INDIVIDUAL WILL HAVE A DIFFERENT RESPONSE TO THEM, AND I LIKE THAT."

that Chang doesn't give titles to his jewelry—besides some pieces named after the place where they are located—indicates that they are open to any interpretation. Chang wants people to respond to his work like they respond to music, with their senses and feelings, instead of only through intellectual reasoning.

In the summer of 2007 Peter Chang had his first major British retrospective, titled "Unnatural Selection," at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool. It was the very first time that his drawings, prints, objects, and sculptures were showcased alongside his jewelry. Chang gained recognition in the jewelry community and is generally considered as a jewelry artist, but it seems hardly possible to make a distinction between his jewelry, sculpture, and graphic work. They belong together and should be observed together; in the exhibition it all looked like a quite "natural selection." And isn't Chang the one who claims: "The pieces I create can be sculptures or they can be worn as jewelry. Each individual will have a different response to them, and I like that." The many sculptural objects presented in the exhibition have the same autonomous, and ambivalent, character. Some can be actually used (like the bowls and the pepper and salt mills) but sometimes their function is denied by the design, as is the case with the distorting mirrors and a box that can hardly be opened.

Chang is very capable of making big sculptural works. In 1994 he created a magnificent table that is now in the British Council Collection in Hong Kong. It is a complicated construction of softwood, plywood, and MDF covered in glass-reinforced plastic and veneered in acrylic and polyester resin. The design is a strange hybrid of imagery from pop culture, astronomy, and armor. A few years later, Chang was commissioned to make the handrail of a staircase in the restaurant of the Art Gallery of Inverness, Scotland. The construction looks like a shield that could have belonged to a dragon.

When asked if he considers the wearer of his jewelry, Chang answers: "Only by making compromises in weight, and I have to adjust to the size of the hand." The jewelry of Peter Chang isn't just jewelry as such; it is wearable sculpture. The reasons for creating this work are sculptural in the first place and not typical of jewelry. In spite of, or as a result of this, Chang has found his place in the international jewelry scene, where people highly appreciate his innovative attitude toward materials and techniques and his autonomous, uncompromising interpretation of jewelry.

LIESBETH DEN BESTEN, an art historian, is the chairwoman of the Françoise van den Bosch Foundation and a member of Think Tank, a European Initiative for the Applied Arts.

1 Peter Chang, interview, Munich, Germany, October 3, 2007.
2 Alyson Pollard, *Unnatural Selection – Jewelry, Objects and Sculpture by Peter Chang* (Walker Art Gallery, exhibition catalogue, 2007), p.21.
3 Cornelie Holzach, *Peter Chang, Jewellery, Objects, Sculptures* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2002).
4 From review in *NRC Handelsblad*, September 4, 1988.

opposite
German Bracelet, 2006
acrylic, resin, aluminum
7 1/8 x 6 5/8 x 2 1/4"

Drawing for German Bracelet, 2006
pencil on paper
11 3/4 x 8 1/4"

above
Table, 1994
plywood, timber, acrylic and resin
28 1/2 x 80 1/2 x 40"
Collection of British Council

Table (detail), 1994

by MATTHEW KANGAS

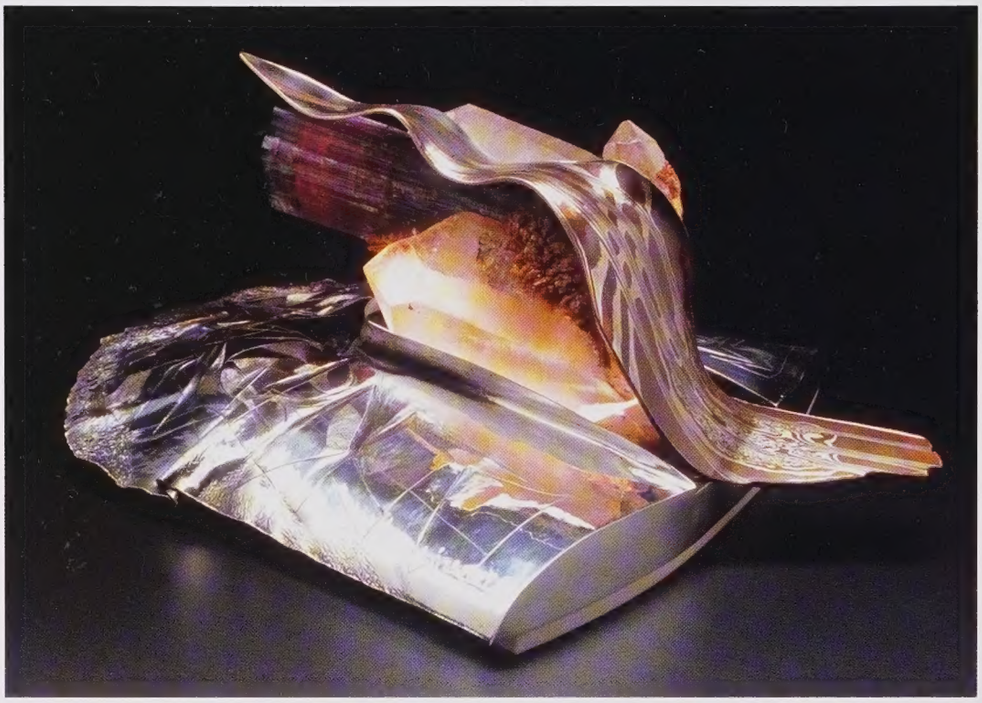
JOHN MARSHALL

AND THE BIRTH OF TIME

John Marshall's position in American art is an awkward one. His sculptures of fine silver with acrylic, Corian, wood, and basalt are larger than the ornamental metal objects usually associated with silver. At the same time, they are smaller than the over-scaled, not to say monumental, size the rest of contemporary sculpture has occupied over the past few decades. (True, Marshall executed a series of site-related liturgical commissions, but they should be the subject of another essay.)

Trained as a metals artist at the Cleveland Institute of Art, and later Syracuse University, he was most recently head of metals at the University of Washington (he retired in 2001). Mainly working from private and public commissions, Marshall was absent from the art gallery scene for a long time. His unique projects, including 14 sculptures using precious gemstones for a former Apple executive in California's Silicon Valley, were completely different and unexpected. Critics and sympathetic curators have not always known what to make of them.

Summit, 2007
sterling silver, basalt
33 1/2 x 18 3/4 x 8"
Photo: Jerry Davis



RECEPTIVE TO ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION, MARSHALL'S SCULPTURES CAN OPEN THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION ONTO A FASCINATING INTERNAL WORLD, EVEN A "UNIVERSE" AS ONE CURATOR CALLED IT,[2] WHEREIN MATERIALS ACT IN BOTH ART AND CRAFT DIMENSIONS.

In a 1991 *Metalsmith* interview, former Seattle Art Museum curator Patterson Sims asked Marshall, "Would you say you were a metalsmith, a sculptor, a maker of functional works, or a craftsman?" Marshall bristled, responding that the very question "irritates me," and continued: "Whether you like it or whether it goes in a history book, I could care less. . . For someone to ask me whether I want to be a sculptor, jeweler, or metalsmith is, at this point, foolish. I think I have enough of a reputation that I can do what the hell I want to do."[1] To be fair, Sims had earlier in the interview disparaged Marshall's sculptures, telling him, "I'm more impressed by the functional pieces than. . . by the sculptural pieces. Your sculptural pieces seem to be too frozen by conventions of the 1950s and 60s, whereas your functional pieces seem to be able to transcend tradition."

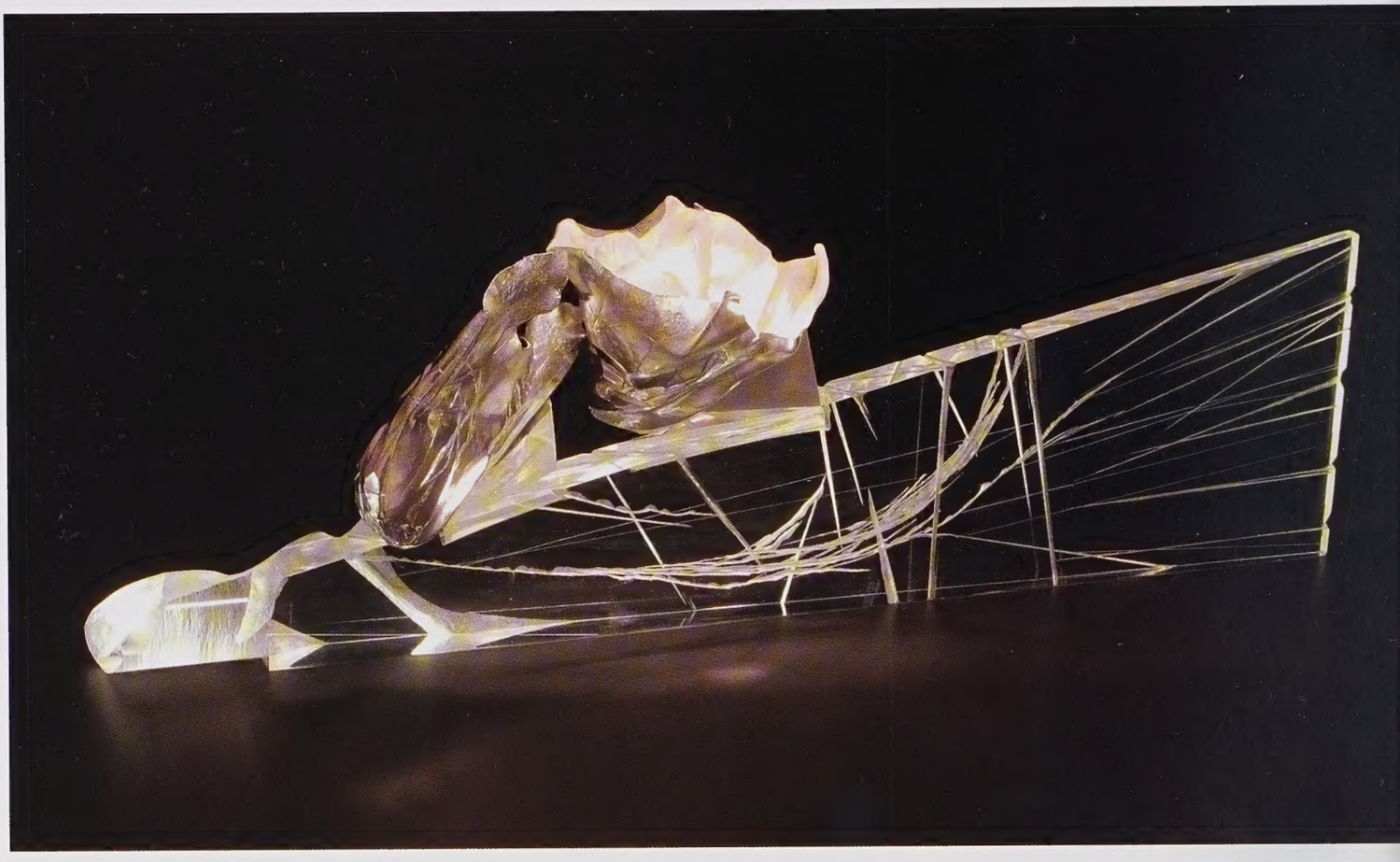
That Marshall did not follow trends that Sims was conditioned to respect (Minimalism, Postminimalism, Conceptualism, etc.), and that, perhaps, Marshall did indeed follow "conventions of the 1950s and 60s" must be admitted. (He's professed to admiring Henry Moore more than any other sculptor.) However, when Marshall's sculptures are placed in a room of their own (as they were in the home of his greatest patron, the late Patrick Lannan) rather than shoehorned into Sims's New York-centric art world, they make more sense. Like any other serious art, they may operate on both symbolic and metaphorical levels. Receptive to analysis and interpretation, Marshall's sculptures can open the doors of perception onto a fascinating internal world, even a "universe" as one curator called it,[2] wherein materials act in both art and craft dimensions. Indeed, Marshall's painstaking craft and the fact that he spends up to two years on one piece suggest that the key uniting element in his work in terms of meaning and process, is the birth of time.

Leaving aside the commissioned coffee services, flatware, chalices and baptismal fonts, and other more socially rooted artworks, let us concentrate on a few of Marshall's sculptures, from his first all-silver pieces to those that combine acrylic as a stand-in for glass or ice, and on to more recent silver-and-basalt sculptures, exhibited last fall at Seattle's William Traver Gallery.

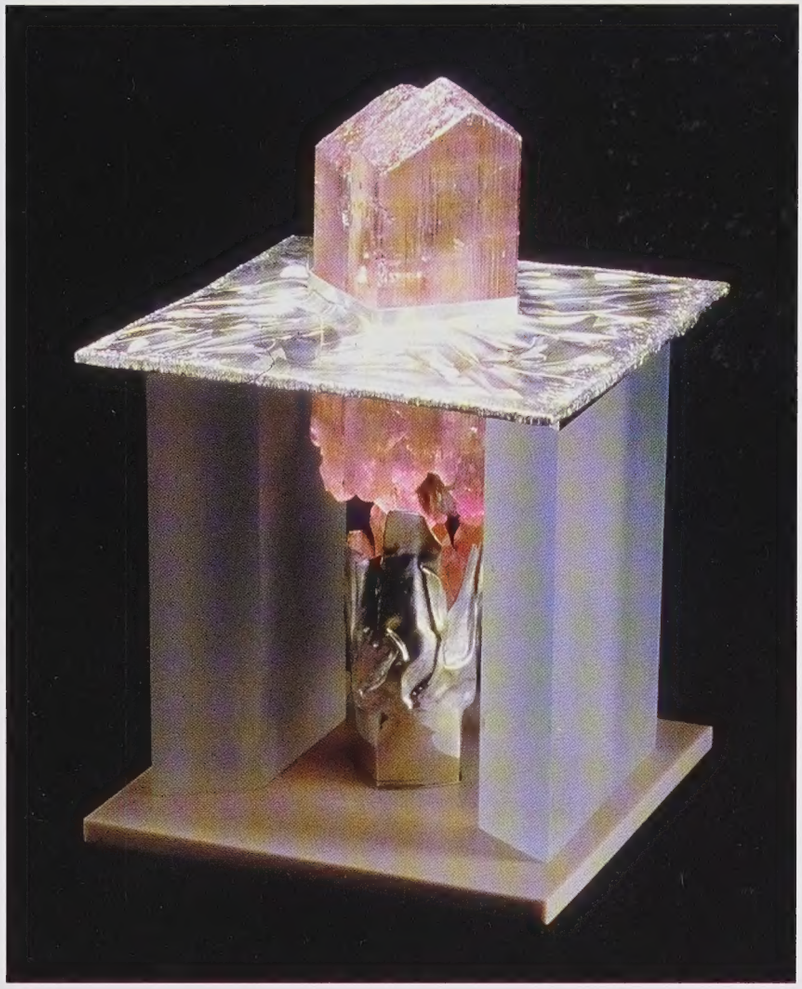
That Marshall has been more difficult to situate as a sculptor than, say, Albert Paley, has to do with scale, materials, and content. Much of Paley's art, by comparison, involves the wholesale reconfiguration of nineteenth-century European decorative arts history. With models like Art Nouveau and Vienna Secession sufficiently distanced from the present, Paley has openly revealed his tracks (to those aware of such roots) and concealed them (from those seeking non-threatening corporate and public art). Because Marshall uses silver, decorative expectations run high.

above
Serpent, 1991
sterling silver and copper mokume gane, "Pala Blue Cap" tourmaline, acrylic, Corian
7 x 15 1/4 x 17 1/4"
Collection of Michael M. Scott
Photo: Jerry Davis

opposite
Growth Cycle, 1991
sterling silver, acrylic
11 x 7 x 9 1/2"
Collection of Michael M. Scott
Photo: Jerry Davis



PRIMAL ORIGINS OF TIME AND, IN TURN, EARTH, LIGHT AND MATTER, BEGAN TO PREOCCUPY THE ARTIST.



How could silver, with its ornate historical baggage, be considered a serious sculptural material? When we seek historical examples of anything approaching mid- to large-scale silver sculptures, all roads lead to the Renaissance or the American Gilded Age: commemorative trophies for the landed and lettered elite. This is not a good omen.

Determined to expand silver's potential for expressive and meaningful sculpture, Marshall began with *Aurora* (1983), a solid-silver, die-formed four-foot square evocative of dawn, the beginning of the day—the birth of time. Indeed, as things transpired with Lannan (who went on to commission six more sculptures), primal origins of time and, in turn, earth, light and matter, began to preoccupy the artist. These propensities were discussed at length by one of the more percipient of Marshall's critics, C. E. Licka, who, writing in *American Craft* in 1985, closely scrutinized the Lannan commissions (now in the collection of the National Museum of Ornamental Metals) in a broader intellectual context. Licka wrote, "Time seems momentarily frozen...lines, edges and folds slowly emerge."[3]

Marshall considers *Growth Cycle* (1991) his first serious sculpture to enlist silver and acrylic. Combining chasing and repoussé techniques on an open-topped silver form, Marshall used the lower acrylic support to mimic geological phenomena he saw during a crucial 1978 visit to Alaska. Still a vessel, but with separate silver and acrylic elements, Marshall introduced transparency, but failed to fully integrate his new marriage of materials.

Among the gemstone "settings" done for the computer mogul Michael M. Scott, Marshall made breakthroughs that later led to a more fully blended fusion of acrylic and silver. In *Serpent* (1991) and *Organic Cube* (1992), time is not frozen, but witnessed in action as a tremendous interaction of earth-based forces.

opposite from top
Just the Two of Us, 2007
sterling silver, acrylic
8 x 29 1/2 x 5 1/2"
Photo: Jerry Davis

Above the Clouds, 2007
sterling silver, basalt
18 1/2 x 35 x 9"
Photo: Jerry Davis

above
Organic Cube, 1992
sterling silver, acrylic, Kunzite spodumene crystals
15 1/2 x 10 1/4 x 10 1/4"
Collection of Michael M. Scott
Photo: Jerry David

Writhing above a chunk of California tourmaline, a serpent-like swath of layered copper and silver, also known as *mokume gane*, rides the upward thrust from the cracking silvered earth below. Marshall's closest link to figuration, *Serpent* is still tied to the birth of time, and the microscopic, snake-like organisms like planaria present before the dinosaurs, at the dawn of the planet. *Organic Cube*'s kunzite spodumene crystals blast through a flat silver ceiling.

By accepting the Scott commissions, Marshall backed himself further into a dangerous corner. Museum exhibitions temporarily replaced gallery shows. How could the art world accept the use of jewels in serious sculpture when, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, dirt and dust were often the privileged media?

Returning to the pedestal in his recent Seattle exhibition, Marshall embraced yet another conundrum. What could be more passé than pedestal sculpture? Neither earthwork-scale installations nor intimate icons, Marshall's eleven new sculptures even include one that sets a Corian base atop another pedestal base. Without subverting any of the formal issues that important contemporary sculpture attacked over the past two decades—scale, positioning, support, site—Marshall has dug in his heels, followed his own cosmological bent, and left Sims's question forever dangling.

With more scoring on the acrylic than before, *Just the Two of Us* (all new works are 2007) better integrates the silver and plastic. Dealing with basalt this time, the ubiquitous volcanic, igneous rock throughout the Pacific Northwest and Alaska, Marshall returns to the birth of time as a theme. However, despite the better melding of stone and silver, the frequent division between upright silver and downward rocky base lends a tiring familiarity to pieces like *Above the Clouds*, *Sleeping Together*, and *Horizon*, the latter a revisiting of *Serpent*'s lateral crawl over a supporting base. Landscape is more evident in *Above the Clouds*, with its silver "cloud" and chipped, two-part rocky "mountain range" below. The stone peak of *Summit*

DEALING WITH BASALT THIS TIME, THE UBIQUITOUS VOLCANIC, IGNEOUS ROCK THROUGHOUT THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST AND ALASKA, MARSHALL RETURNS TO THE BIRTH OF TIME AS A THEME.

is wrapped in a sheet of silver that unfortunately suggests a metallic foil condom adorning a phallic shaft.

As *Metalsmith* readers know by now, a little *mokume gane* goes a long way. Marshall has used its intricately patterned surface to accentuate a folded cloth or kerchief look in works like *Cloak*. Allusions to origins of time are replaced with bravura material illusionism, so often the fallback position for American crafts masters.

Not really known outside the sphere of craft, Marshall's achievement deserves greater art-world recognition. Setting himself extraordinarily high standards of execution, where can he go next? Glass, instead of acrylic, is one obvious direction in the Pacific Northwest. Anodized, colored metal would be another (Marshall has never addressed color beyond patina). And, finally, in an extension of his submersion in the birth of time or the "freezing" of time, different stones besides gems and the uniformly gray-black basalt could lend variety and instigate compositions beyond the use of stone as a support.

Would all this be too decorative? Too dangerous? With his pathblazing indifference to what others think sculpture should be, Marshall need not worry.

Seattle-based MATTHEW KANGAS is the co-author of the new book *Shy Boy, She Devil and Isis: The Art of Conceptual Craft/Selections from the Wornick Collection* for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

1 Patterson Sims, "John Marshall: A Conversation with Patterson Sims," *Metalsmith*, Summer 1991, 19.
2 Patricia E. Kane, *John Marshall, Metalsmith: Selected Work from 1991-1997* (Seattle: Henry Art Gallery, 1997).
3 C. E. Licka, "John Marshall: Sublime Passages and Other Reflections," *American Craft*, April/May 1985, 13.

opposite
Horizon, 2007
sterling silver, basalt
13 1/2 x 49 1/2 x 7 1/2"
Photo: Jerry Davis

above
Migration, 2007
sterling silver, acrylic
16 1/2 x 35 x 14 1/2"
Photo: Jerry Davis

by MARJORIE SIMON

FROM THE LAND OF CONTRADICTIONS

FOUR ISRAELI JEWELERS

The current traveling exhibition, "Women's Tales: Four Leading Israeli Jewelers," is essentially four mini-retrospectives of the work of Bianca Eshel-Gershuni, Vered Kaminski, Esther Knobel and Deganit Stern Schocken. Although it focuses on just a handful of artists, the show and its catalogue provide an opportunity to assess the broader condition of Israeli jewelry today.

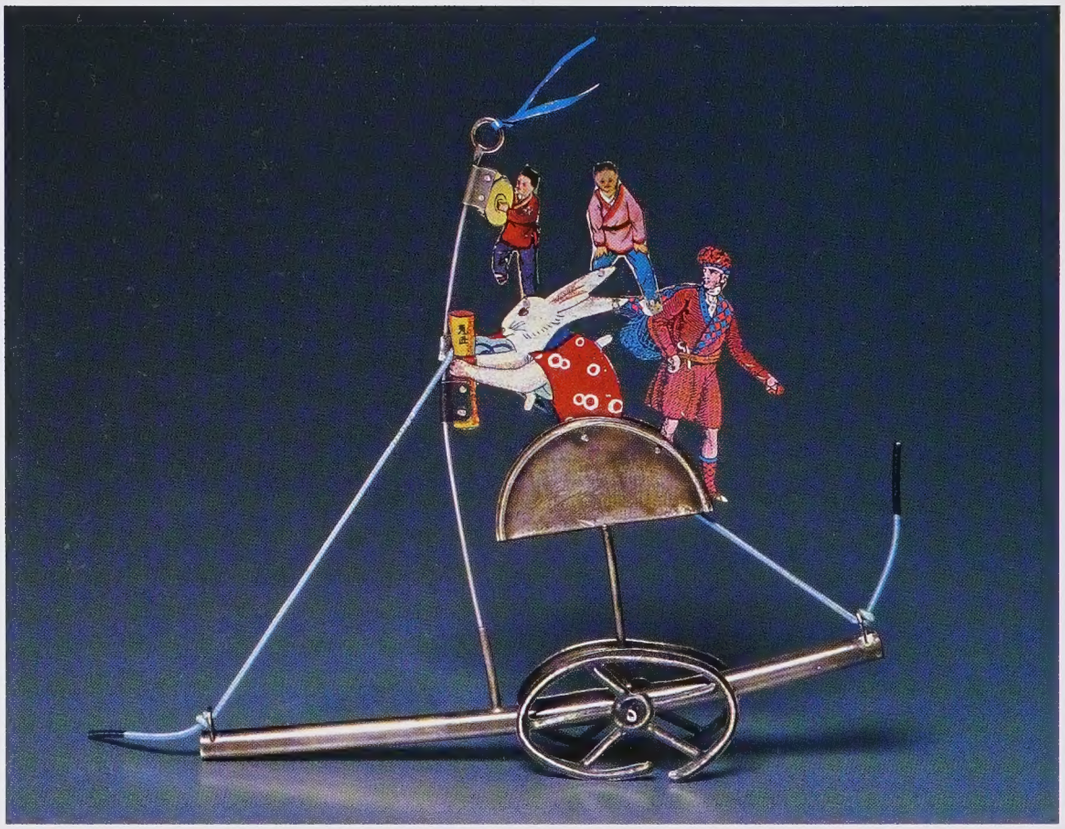
Israeli art jewelry is a genre rooted in the European origins of Israel's early settlers and nurtured by the global outlook of Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, in Jerusalem, where so many practitioners trained and taught. Though these artists live in the Middle East, they connect with Amsterdam, Pforzheim, and Munich, rather than Yemen, Istanbul, or Baghdad.

clockwise from top left
DEGANIT STERN SCHOCKEN
Body Piece (City), 1993
nickel silver, stainless steel, paper, silver, shell
30 x 10 x 1 1/2"

VERED KAMINSKI
Necklace, 2001
anodized aluminum
37 1/8 x 3/4 x 5/8"

BIANCA ESHEL-GERSHUNI
Necklace, 1971
24k and 18k gold, pearls, rubies
8 x 6 x 1 1/2"

ESTHER KNOBEL
Daisy Wire, 1993
silver, 18k gold
7 1/2 x 7 1/2 x 1 1/4"



TO THE GLOBAL MARKET, ISRAEL IS SEEN NOT AS AN ANCIENT LAND WITH A TANGLED HISTORY, BUT AS A YOUNG COUNTRY AND A VERITABLE MELTING POT.

Israel has been poised between East and West since Biblical times, and its tradition of jewelry is almost as ancient. There is evidence from the twelfth century BCE that the Philistines, in what is now Gaza, were accomplished metallurgists. In 63 BCE the Romans arrived and stayed for 500 years, leaving behind great quantities of their iridescent glass. Much later, in the nineteenth century, Yemeni silversmiths brought their skills to the region, financed by the eighteenth-century coffee trade emanating from the port city of Mocha. The only Orientalist influence to survive amid Askenazi (European) design, they helped create a tradition of silversmithing. Then, in the twentieth century, the Bauhaus diaspora brought on by the Nazis introduced functionalism to the new "White City" of Tel Aviv. Today the Mediterranean port city resembles any new European city with its concrete block buildings and shopping malls, while farther inland, Jerusalem retains the stone buildings of its Biblical crossroads, surrounded by the muted colors of the desert.

Like the United States, Israel is an immigrant country, and like most immigrant countries, it is a land of contradictions. Historically unable to own land in Europe, early Jewish settlers felt a powerful connection to this tiny piece of the desert. In the early twentieth century, the arrival of German Jewish immigrants brought the influence of the Bauhaus and other western European aesthetic values, so much so that in 1906 the founding mission of the Bezalel Academy was "to create a synthesis between European artistic traditions and the Jewish design tradition of Eastern Europe...."

Yet, for a long time, Israeli jewelers remained isolated from the European avant-garde. It wasn't until the decade following the so-called Dutch revolution of the 1970s that Esther Knobel, Degalit Stern Schocken, and Vered Kaminski expanded the jewelry horizon at the Bezalel school. *Crafts of Israel*, published in the mid-1970s, reveals a mix of Western (modernist) and Eastern (Yemenite) jewelry styles, including more than a dozen gold and gemstone brooches and necklaces by Bianca Eshel-Gershuni. Poorly reproduced in black and white, they appear out of step with their time, although somewhat reminiscent of British jeweler Gerda Flockinger and some experimental work by Max Ernst. But as re-photographed in color for the exhibition catalogue, the work appears baroque and idiosyncratic, setting Eshel-Geshuni apart from the conventional modernist designs of her Israeli contemporaries such as Amitai Kav and Leon Israel and Americans Elsa Freund and Claire Falkenstein.

Late twentieth-century internationalism eroded nationalist boundaries. Israeli design is now featured in all the international

shows, and with the Internet, all design is connected instantly. This generation of designers owes a debt to Dutch Droog Design, Italian Memphis, even to the American company Knoll from the 1960s. Zaha Hadid, whose architecture inspires Stern Schocken, was born in Iraq but works in England. So does Israeli-born mega-industrial designer Ron Arad. Other Israeli designers, such as Raviv Lifshitz or the team of Ami Drach and Dov Ganchrov, must look outward from such a small country. To the global market, Israel is seen not as an ancient land with a tangled history, but as a young country and a veritable melting pot; a Korean commentary from 2003 attributed this international, future-oriented design to the immigrant status of most Israelis.

Contemporary jewelry exhibitions such as "Beaten Gold: Israeli Jewelry 3," curated by Stern Schocken (2005) and "Studs of Silver," curated by Knobel and Eshel-Gershuni (1998) are wholly European in character. A 2006 exhibition at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York showed Israeli design to be consistent with other European or American product design, with similar environmental consciousness and little mention of war. In a recent exhibition at the Neri Bloomfield Academy of Design and Education in Haifa, art by Jews and Arabs alike dealt with issues of gender, identity, and politics typical of students everywhere.

So it is hardly surprising to learn that Kaminski, Knobel, and Stern Schocken all studied abroad, primarily in London. Only Bianca Eshel-Gershuni remains insular and inward looking. Esther Knobel especially reveals eclectic interests. She denies a feminist impulse—but we needn't take her word for it. There is a tenderness to her work, from the simple, delicate flower blossoms–real ones, clasped in silver, or enameled copper bouquets–to laminated flower petals and flower imagery (yes, Gijs Bakker laminated flower petals too, but he made them dominate the wearer, whereas Knobel's are more intimate and, well, feminine). Knobel's work resonates with memory and loss. *Requiem* (1994), a group of folded, die-formed pendants, reverberates from the anonymous victims of the Holocaust to the gas masks of the Gulf War. A simple yet haunting impression of a needle in silver was her contribution to "Mikromegas," artist Otto Künzli's invitational voyage to the miniature. *Immigrants Brooch* (1993) depicts the fragile balance and vulnerability of journeying to a new land, complete with a broken wagon wheel.

opposite
ESTHER KNOBEL
Immigrants Brooch, 1993
nickel silver, recycled tin can, elastic band, stainless steel
4 3/4 x 5 x 1/2"

above
ESTHER KNOBEL
Requiem, 1994
copper, brass, thread
dimensions variable

HER OBSESSION WITH DEATH IN THE USE OF ARMORED, TURTLE IMAGERY ECHOES THE MANY OSSUARIES (SMALL "HOUSES" OR CASKETS) FOUND IN THE ISRAEL MUSEUM.

Vered Kaminski similarly refutes the political subtext of her choice of stones and wire. But Jerusalem stone is unavoidable–whether thrown by protestors, or simply everywhere one looks in constant construction projects, in shades of beige, tan, and sand. Stones are the weapons of the disenfranchised. Palestinian-identified artist Nida Sinnokrot, who was raised in Algeria and lives in New York, also uses stones as potent icons; they're what Palestinian children throw at Israeli soldiers. Kaminski's stones range from mosaic (flat, graphic design) to three-dimensional reproductions in anodized aluminum, showing an affinity to Dutch jewelers Peggy Bannenberg and Peter Hoogeboom. South African-born (but Germany-based) artist Daniel Kruger has used chunks of glass in similar settings to suggest a grid of stones. But Kaminski also embraces life in fabricating sprightly trees, recalling those of Merry Renk a half-century before. Like the stones, Kaminski's trees have an unspoken subtext: Jews all over the world have planted trees in Israel to commemorate special occasions.

Though little known in the United States, Bianca Eshel-Gershuni has a greater presence in Israel; a new book about her work appeared in the summer of 2007. In her essay for the "Women's Tales" catalogue, Davira S. Taragin states that Eshel-Gershuni views herself as a victim (she was widowed in her twenties and later divorced Gershuni, her second husband and father of her children, after his homosexuality made their life together untenable). In an interview, she likens herself to Jesus, as someone who "will remain in people's awareness even after my death."[1] But if she is not the singular force for change that she imagines (Dutch artist Petra Hartman created narrative work with papier-mache and found objects in the early 1990s; German artist Wolli made over-the-top "naive" baroque jewelry), Eshel-Gershuni is not wrong to claim credit for going against the modernist grain in the 1950s and '60s with her baroque constructions. Her pioneering use of "readymades" contrasted with the sleek Scandinavian and Bauhaus designs of the times. Eshel-Gershuni brought the "feminine" principle to her artwork early on, through flowers and an earthy materialism consistent with the essentialist feminist art of the 1970s. Her obsession with death in the use of armored, turtle imagery echoes the many ossuaries (small "houses" or caskets) found in the Israel Museum.

In his commentary on Deganit Stern Schocken, Alex Ward notes that she has been criticized for the self-conscious presentation of

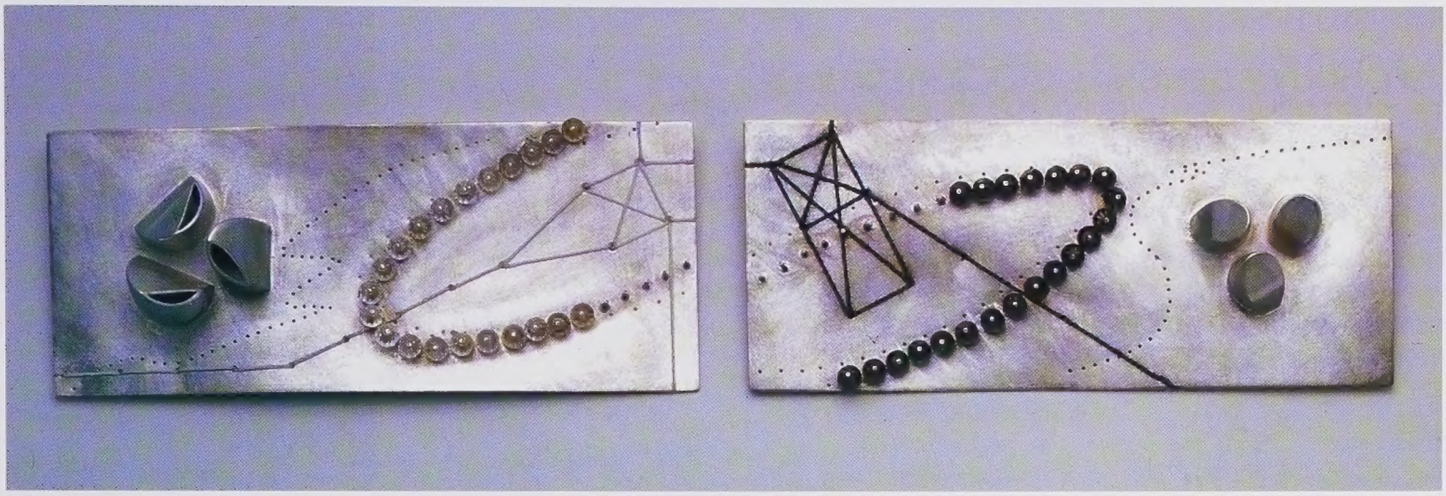
opposite
VERED KAMINSKI
Necklace, 1991
18k gold, stones
19 1/8 x 3/4 x 3/4"

VERED KAMINSKI
2 9th, 1999
brass
10 1/2 x 18 x 16"

above
BIANCA ESHEL-GERSHUNI
My Grave (ring), 1977
18k and 24k gold, plastic, plaster, feathers, pearls, paint
2 1/2 x 4 3/4 x 1 1/2"

BIANCA ESHEL-GERSHUNI
Turtle (brooch), 1998
modeling clay, 24k gold leaf, paint, metal
4 1/4 x 4 x 1"

STERN SCHOCKEN HAS COMPARED THE BODY TO A CITY, STATING THAT JEWELRY ON THE BODY CANNOT BE EXPERIENCED ALL AT ONCE, THE WAY A CITY IS EXPERIENCED GRADUALLY, IN PARTS.



her work. The spiky compositions distance them from the body, even though one is titled *Body Piece*. Stern Schocken has compared the body to a city, stating that jewelry on the body cannot be experienced all at once, the way a city is experienced gradually, in parts. The viewer is free to disagree. A kibbutznik and child of World War II-era immigrants, Stern Schocken studied architecture and was married to an architect; structure informs much of her work. A pair of *Landscape Brooches* uses thread to delineate geometric or architectural space, and not, as Knobel has done, in a traditional female manner. The assembled silver pieces of her series titled "City" suggest the work of British sculptor Cornelia Parker living in a war zone.

Along with Kaminski, she shares a toughness and fearlessness about materials: Stern Schocken leaves sprues attached and Kaminski uses real stones. In the "Studs of Silver" exhibition, their work was by far the strongest. And the newly formed Association of Israel's Decorative Arts (AIDA), which has presented Israeli craft artists at the annual SOFA Chicago show in recent years, inadvertently reveals the gap between them and others coming out of the country.

"Women's Tales" argues both the universality of postmodern, polyhistorical global design and the historical specificity of Israel: Eshel-Gershuni's early widowhood at the birth of the modern state of Israel; Kaminski's Jerusalem stones and wire fences; Stern Schocken's connection to the modern secular city of Tel Aviv with its Bauhaus architecture; and Knobel's protectiveness reflecting her status as a child of Holocaust survivors, and the resulting vulnerability and toughness as a first-generation immigrant and mother of a solitary son who is destined for the army. The catalogue contextualizes the work and the artists, providing knowledgeable commentary and documenting a time and place in the continuing story of jewelry and objects. Taragin locates the work within global art and intellectual movements from the 1970s onward, including feminism and the validation of women's work in fine craft. Which makes one curious about the title. It's true that the four artists are women, and their work does reflect certain feminist themes, including a questioning of artists' gender identifications. But surely we have arrived at a point of taking work at face value without such qualifiers.

The catalogue also features a personal essay by Helen Drutt English that brings the reader into the homes and lives of the artists, contrasting the obsessive disorder of Eshel-Gershuni's live-work studio in Ra'anana (a suburb of Tel Aviv originally settled by New Yorkers and now attracting English speakers from the UK and South Africa) with the formal precision of Kaminski's Jerusalem home and studio in a former Arab villa (bought, not stolen, she adds). Drutt's long association with each artist enables her to discuss their evolution and growth while reminiscing about previous encounters.

As it should, the work prevails. It's everything: strong, confident, concerned with the personal as well as the structural, and, like oranges grown in the desert, beauty from an unquiet place.

MARJORIE SIMON is a metalsmith and writer residing in Philadelphia.

Originating at the Racine Art Museum, "Women's Tales" travels to the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, and then to the Newark Museum, Newark, NJ, from March 19–June 25, 2008. After touring Europe, it will conclude at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem in 2009–10.

[1] http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/886686.html

opposite
DEGANIT STERN SCHOCKEN
City from "How Many is One" series, 2003–'04
silver, semiprecious stones
14 x 14 3/4 x 1 1/2"

above
DEGANIT STERN SCHOCKEN
Landscape Brooch (two parts), 1996
silver, cotton thread, quartz
width each 4 1/2"

"COLLECTING BY DESIGN: SILVER & METALWORK OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY FROM THE MARGO GRANT WALSH COLLECTION"

INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL, SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
JANUARY 29–AUGUST 13, 2007

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON
MARCH 15–AUGUST 3, 2008

by JENNIFER CROSS GANS

In 1981, the distinguished interior architect and designer Margo Grant Walsh fell in love with a silver tankard. She bought her first collector's piece, a small dish, at the Kalo Shop in Chicago, soon after. Then she became a major collector of European and American silverware, and donated some 250 pieces to the Portland Art Museum. A selection of these pieces, plus another 320 from her private collection, were loaned to the San Francisco Airport Museums to compose this world-class exhibition.

To a generation raised on stainless steel or plastic, the range of objects—particularly for the home, including tea and coffee sets, candlesticks, trays, clocks, bowls, beakers, flatware of all kinds—was awe-inspiring. Everything is functional; Grant Walsh does not collect sculptural or fantastic teapots that would never make tea.

Grant Walsh's main love is silver holloware and flatware. In 25 years, she acquired a collection that well represented most of the major design styles of the century. She found pieces through the various craft associations created to serve the burgeoning market, for example in London, Birmingham, Sheffield, and throughout Germany. She also collected pieces from companies like Liberty of London, Reed and Barton, Tiffany, and Shreve, which hired some first-rate craftsmen (many of whom, alas, remain anonymous). The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths of the City of London, originally a medieval guild, continues to be a major patron and inspirer of fine design, and to this day hosts an annual fair, at which Grant Walsh acquired several works.

The later influence of Scandinavian designers is also reflected in Grant Walsh's collection. Danish designer Georg Jensen was a prime mover, not only as an artist in his own right but in terms of the designers he hired and trained, including Alphonse La Paglia, William de Matteo, and Evald Nielsen. Even after two world wars, their influence endured, as some of these artists emigrated to the U.S. to set up their own businesses. This generation in turn trained younger artists, like John Prip, who became successful in the field. Grant Walsh also invested in American designers, including Marie Zimmerman and Walter Waldo Dodge. Her collection reveals a particular fondness for metal artists who were architects, including Dodge, Christopher Dresser, Thorvald Bindesbell, Archibald Knox, and William Spratling.

Studio artists and art historians should note that the exhibition did not include elements of gold, stainless steel, silver plate, plastic, or decorative ironwork. Grant Walsh was also not a collector of Cubist or space-age pieces; she had relatively few late-twentieth-century pieces, and certainly no "bling." There was very little jewelry on view, apart from a few pieces by Jensen and Nielsen, anonymous Arts and Crafts–inspired work, and a scattering of Native American and post-Spratling designers.

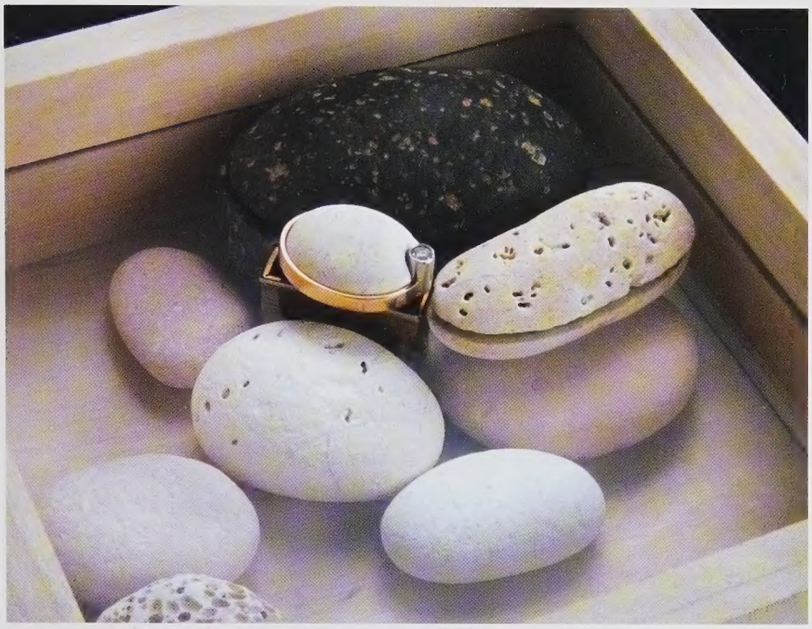
Overall, the exhibition was well mounted and captioned, and included brief but informative biographies of some of the most prominent artists, plus information about the major related art movements. Of course, any airport display contends with travelers' preoccupations with departures, lines, and luggage. The division of the exhibition into two sections possibly attracted more viewers, but interrupted the historical continuity and also likely reduced the chance that people would see everything. However, it was a welcome change to see art objects of this caliber in a setting far removed from a major museum or art gallery.

JENNIFER CROSS GANS is a writer and studio artist living in San Francisco.

top to bottom
BIRMINGHAM GUILD OF HANDICRAFT
Pitcher, c. 1900
copper
8 1/2 x 4 1/2"

EVALD NIELSEN
Teapot and Stand, 1920
sterling silver, ivory
7 3/4 x 6 1/4"

M.T. WETZLAR
Canister, c. 1930
silver, ivory



Porto Nuovo (ring with box), 2007
18k gold, platinum, diamond,
bronze, found rock, Plexiglas, wood
5 x 5 x 2"

Spoleto (neckpiece), 2007
18k gold, fine and sterling silver,
jade, found rock, rubber
6 x 6 x 1/2"

"C. JAMES MEYER"

QUIRK GALLERY, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA
JULY 27–AUGUST 31, 2007

by KATE DOBBS ARIAIL

The aptly named Quirk Gallery began its "Vault" project, representing several art jewelers, last January. Although a commercial gallery, Quirk has strong ties to Virginia Commonwealth University, which is well known for its department of Craft and Material Studies, and exemplary metals program. For the first series of monthly "Vault" exhibitions, Quirk recruited as curator Susie Ganch, a jeweler and currently head of metals at VCU. Ganch put together a wide-ranging group of artists working in the multi-material field of contemporary body adornment. One of her picks was C. James Meyer, who from 1973 to 2005 had taught at VCU, and whom Ganch replaced.

The Vault is a tiny, windowless room, separated from the rest of the gallery by an industrial sliding door. The scale of the room is perfect for jewelry, but if it weren't for that brute of a door, and the muscularity of the white-painted brick, this little white cube might be too precious a jewel box for the bold objects exhibited there.

Since his release from full-time academia, Meyer has been refreshing himself with teaching at Penland and other craft schools, and in Italy with the University of Georgia program in Cortona. The effects of these places can be seen in the new pieces, which also express his ongoing concerns with certain forms and ideas.

Meyer has long been interested in combining fine metals and jewels with found items, particularly stones. The most successful work in this four-piece show is *Porto Nuovo*, a ring and box set that employs 18k gold, platinum, and a diamond, along with bronze, beach stones, Plexiglas, and wood. The entire construction is only five inches square and two inches deep, but, when gazing into this neat box, one is touched by the sense of the ocean's expansive wonder, as made comprehensible to mere humans by its calm tidal pools.

On the floor of the shallow sand-colored box, lovely pale pebbles are arranged in a seemingly artless, "natural" grouping and filmed, as if covered in water, by Plexiglas. Above that smooth surface rises a lone pitted rock, then a cluster with varying textures and colors. Two rocks have been sliced, and sit above their lower sections, which extend slightly as if magnified by the water. The third rock is bezeled and set with a diamond—and when lifted out is revealed as a very beautifully designed ring. *Porto Nuovo* is an elegant object, and provides a satisfying alternative to hiding a ring away in a drawer. It solves one of jewelry's identity problems: Generally a ring's identity as a sculptural object requires its location on the body. Here it is context that allows it to be part of a larger three-dimensional composition—a "housing" solution that perhaps harks back to Meyer's early interest in architecture as sculpture.

Although it is not visible from any distance, up close one can unfortunately see the construction that allows the ring to sit upright at the correct angle. This minor flaw is rectified in the other box/stones/ring arrangements, each of which has a different emotional tone. They are all exquisite in their bridging of the natural and artful, and generous in their implicit acknowledgement of the values of diverse materials.

The leaf shape that Meyer has long used in a more abstracted form appears in the wonderful *Brooch (Stick with Leaf)*, which rests in its own box above a photograph (by Anna Tomczak) that calls to mind broken shadows on the forest floor. The metal leaf curls over the cast glass stick with such naturalistic delicacy that the crisp mechanics of the fastenings on the reverse are a bit of a shock.

The leaf appears again in the exhibition's only neckpiece, *Spoleto*. Here the found elements include a stone, but also jade leaf shapes appropriated from an earring bought in Italy. Although the jade leaves are augmented with others made from silver and gold, all attached to marvelously worked "stems," the composition immediately evokes the image of a laurel wreath. The stems are jointed together so that the piece can move over the collarbone, and the leaf petioles allow them to shimmer with each movement. The dark leather cord that fastens the glowing branches around the neck strikes an uneasy note, but the music of gold, silver, and stone played by a master craftsman rings out joyously.

KATE DOBBS ARIAIL is a cultural critic residing in Durham, North Carolina.

"CAR BOMBING: CAL LANE"

ART MÛR, MONTRÉAL, CANADA
APRIL 26–MAY 26, 2007

by SHELLEY POMERANCE

The work of Cal Lane conveys nostalgia for the pastimes of gardening, lacemaking, and cake decorating, while transposing traditionally female decorative imagery onto male-identified metal tools and objects. It conjures up the conventional associations of lace: light and dark, weddings and funerals, sex and death. But this work is disturbing in its very beauty and sentiment, as if the cake were too sweet, the flowers' scent too cloying, the lace tablecloth too elaborate.

Lane makes lace out of rusted metal objects—shovels, wheelbarrows, smashed car parts, manhole covers, steel beams, and oil drums—transforming them into delicate, floral cutouts. She pits work against leisure, durability against delicacy, utility against beauty, decay against perfection.

A Canadian now based in New York, Lane went to the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design. She has studied welding, taught it herself, and worked as a welder. Once, while employed in a machine shop, to poke fun at her male co-workers and at her own presence in this bastion of masculinity, she placed white paper doilies on the dirty, oily steel drill press, band saw, and anvil. From there, it was just one step to making doilies out of steel itself.

A wheelbarrow and several shovels are transformed, their surfaces incised with floral patterns, rendering them useless in the garden, the ditch, or the grave. Tools used to cultivate plants and flowers have become decorative objects themselves. First, Lane corrodes the metal surface, spraying it with vinegar. She lays a lace tablecloth, stencil-like, over the metal, and draws the floral pattern on the shovel or wheelbarrow surface. Then, using a plasma cutter, she incises the pattern in the metal, before applying a clear coat of varnish. To give the shovel's long wooden handle an aged look, Lane burns and sands the wood, then rubs in two different colors of paint.

Filigree Car Bombing is an assemblage of wrecked car parts, also pierced with floral patterns, reminiscent of the lacy look of sheet metal eaten away by time and rust. But here the vehicle's crushed body has been turned into lace under the heat and pressure of the artist's plasma cutter. For Lane, the crumpled steel evokes folds of fabric, "a jarring contrast between something hideous and something attractive." On the floor lies an impermanent ornamental rug: dirt sifted through a lace tablecloth to create a floral motif the way Lane's grandmother sifted powdered sugar through paper doilies to decorate a cake.

Because this metal work is so detailed and intricate, people often assume that Lane uses laser technology. But this is manual labor, and these are handmade objects, just like the cakes and tablecloths that inspired them. She compares the plasma cutter and oxyacetylene torch to a pencil, and describes this technique as drawing and carving at the same time. The lines have a rough, uneven edge, and if she chooses she can modify the pattern as she works. The plasma cutter works quickly; the torch is slower and more painstaking, preferable for cutting through the thickness of a steel beam.

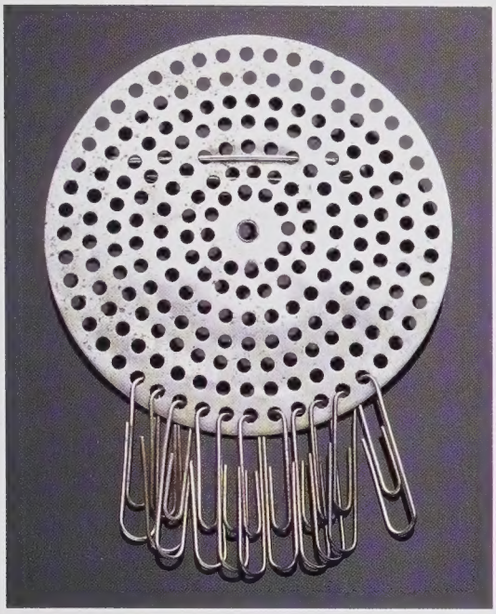
The contrast between the solidly male, rusted metal objects and their flowery, delicate surfaces, the overlay of one idea on the other, is at once alluring and repellent, bordering on the precious; the contrasts between male and female, force and fragility, decoration and decay somehow too obvious. It makes one yearn for something confused, not at all pretty. But there is ambiguity here. This work straddles that uneasy line between decorative art and sculpture, and perhaps that is exactly what Lane means to do—to make us teeter shakily on that line, unable to decide in which camp these works lie, to provoke the head-on collision of art and craft, beauty and utility, form and function.

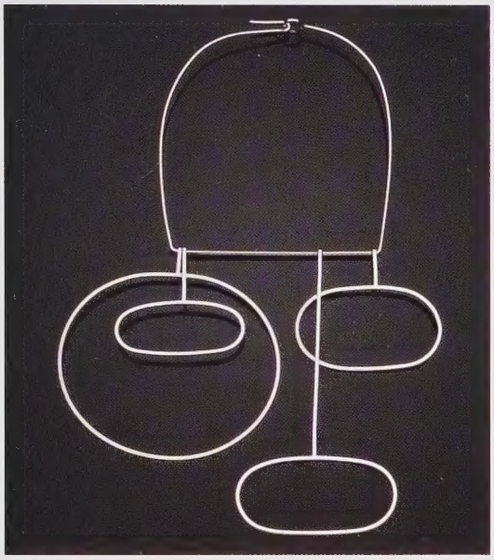
SHELLEY POMERANCE is an arts writer living in Montréal.

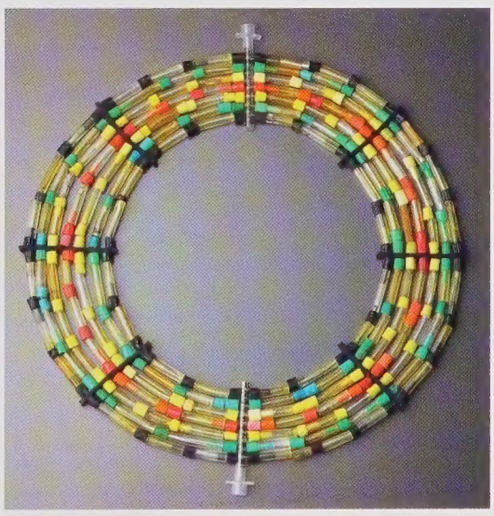
clockwise from top
Wheelbarrow, 2006
cut steel
55 x 26 1/4 x 26 1/4"

Shovels, 2006
cut steel
58 x 8"

Car Bombing, 2006
cut steel
dimensions variable







from top
ANNI ALBERS
Brooch, 1946
aluminum strainer, paper clips, safety pin
4 1/4 x 3 1/8 x 3/8"

BETTY COOKE
Necklace, c. 1959
silver
10 1/2 x 7 1/4 x 1/2"

JAN YAGER
American Collar II from "City Flora/City Flotsam" series, 1996
plastic, rubber, stainless steel, silver, crack vials, crack caps, syringes, silver crack cap
13 x 12 1/4 x 1/4"

"JEWELRY BY ARTISTS: THE DAPHNE FARAGO COLLECTION"

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
MAY 22, 2007–MARCH 5, 2008

by MARTINA WINDELS

In 2006 Daphne Farago donated her extensive collection of contemporary studio jewelry by leading American and European artists to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. In addition, Farago and her husband, Peter, generously contributed to the campaign for the major addition to the museum designed by Sir Norman Foster, and a gallery devoted to studio craft will be named in their honor.

According to the Museum of Fine Arts, it now holds one of the most comprehensive collections of twentieth-century studio jewelry in the world. Their exhibition, "Jewelry by Artists: The Daphne Farago Collection," showcases nearly 200 of the 600-piece collection, as well as some of the additional 100 pieces that Farago has promised to the MFA. Farago began collecting jewelry made by artists in 1989 with the intent that the collection eventually would be held by a museum. She chose to give her collection to the Boston MFA based on the belief that jewelry is best viewed in the context of art from other periods, as found in the encyclopedic holdings of the MFA with its extensive collections of antique jewelry, decorative arts, and fine arts.

The exhibition attempts to survey the field of jewelry through the perspective of one collector. Ironically, the breadth of the collection provided one of the greatest challenges. It took the trained eye of curator Kelly D'Ecuyer to pare down this overwhelming assemblage into a comprehensive, coherent overview of American studio jewelry.

Grey gallery walls, off set only by a few pastel green accent walls, provide an understated backdrop for the sleek metal cases, in which the selected pieces are displayed on plain white boards. The works are arranged in three sections: a chronological survey of studio jewelry from its beginning in the 1940s to the present; a sampling of recurring materials and techniques in contemporary jewelry; and a section titled "Jewelry Designed by Artists."

The largest part of the exhibition offers a chronological who's who in American and European studio jewelry: Alexander Calder's hammered necklace in sterling silver (1941) and a feathery brooch (1941) by Harry Bertoia greet us in one of the first cases, followed by a collection of modernist jewelry, notably an early found-object brooch by Anni Albers (1946): a sink strainer with several paperclips dangling from it. Space Age designs include necklaces by Betty Cooke with beautifully simple, modern lines. Some slightly amateurish works from mid-century evolve into eclectic and surreal-looking pieces made in workshops and studios on both coasts. While Pop culture shaped works in the '60s, nature, landscape, and organic forms make a comeback in the '70s, when new techniques and skill paved the way for more personal expression by artists. This work is followed by examples of body sculpture, which explore the body's pivotal role in relationship to jewelry.

As a result of growing experimentation and the rise of jewelry programs at academic institutions in the United States and Europe, the stylistic progression starts to dissolve as larger issues come under investigation, such as the questioning of precious materials and cultural values in jewelry. An interest in narrative, myth, and history also emerged. Jan Yager provides stark social commentary with her conceptual pieces like *American Collar II* (1996), a necklace made entirely of found crack vials and hypodermic needles. Most works in this part of the exhibition were made from the 1980s forward, further illuminating the trend toward greater diversification within the field of contemporary studio jewelry.

In the next part of the survey, chronology is abandoned entirely and the focus is instead on recurring themes and techniques in jewelry making. Surface ornament and textures from diverse materials like eggshells (Thomas Gentille's 1987 *Britannia* armlet) or mica (Joan Parcher's 1994 necklace) are explored, while traditional jewelry materials such as enamel and glass are given fresh interpretations. Delicate, painstaking beadwork is displayed next to jewelry made from recycled materials and plastic.

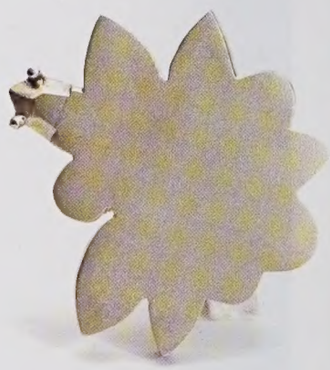
The third and smallest section, titled "Jewelry Designed by Artists," consists of mostly gold pieces conceived by famous artists like Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst, Arnaldo Pomodoro, and Niki de Saint Phalle. Almost all of these works were executed by Gem Montebello of Italy, or François Hugo in France, two small jewelry houses specializing in the fabrication of custom pieces. In the context of this exhibition's focus on exceptional handmade jewelry by individual artists, this group seems out of place; most of the pieces come across as "cute" versions of the original art that we all recognize. They make abundantly clear the fact that jewelry is not just "small" sculpture, and underscore the crucial importance of its relationship to the human body.

MARTINA WINDELS is a jeweler and the former owner of a gallery for contemporary jewelry in Providence, Rhode Island.

"ANYA KIVARKIS: BLIND SPOT"

SIENNA GALLERY, LEXINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS
AUGUST 10–SEPTEMBER 4, 2007

by ALYSSA DEE KRAUSS



from top
Dirk Dirkscz van Santvoort c.1644, 2007
sterling, nickel silver, 14k palladium white gold, enamel auto paint
3 1/4 x 5 x 1/2"

Penelope Cruz Earrings, 2007 Academy Awards, 2007
sterling silver, 14k Palladium white gold
each 1 1/4 x 1 1/4"

The physiology of the human eye is such that we all have blind spots. We don't "see" them because our brains use surrounding visual clues to fabricate and fill in the missing information. Quantum mechanics holds that no perception is absolute and that *everything* is changed by the simple act of being observed. The jewelry in "Blind Spot" illustrates these principles.

Anya Kivarkis is a technically accomplished jeweler who reconstructs historically documented baroque jewelry with a new eye. Like someone erasing a drawing in a way that leaves only traces, she covers precious metal surfaces with an ample coat of satiny white automotive paint. She gives us a look back in history, but censors our view, as if handing over classified documents "whited-out" in a way that actually highlights the passages that are missing. By calling attention to what we cannot see, she shows us that observing history from our present perspective impairs our vision.

The paint obscures the work without extinguishing it. Coated, the traditional historic qualities—geometric precision, decorative filigree and sharp facets—seem fuzzy and imprecise. Like white cotton sheets thrown over the antique furniture in old British estates, paint rounds crisp edges and accumulates in recessed areas. The colorlessness of white aptly suggests blankness and erasure. Sienna Patti made an excellent choice to exhibit the all-white work on white shelving against a white wall, leaving only shadows, grey-to-black shapes and lines, to define the baroque forms and contrast the work against itself and the background. Still, to provide a greater appreciation for the work's complexity Kivarkis might consider incorporating her resource images into future installations.

The two unpainted works in the show lack the seduction of the veil, but Kivarkis also uses her forms to maintain emphasis on the hidden. Displacing what is traditionally out in front, several brooches have their decorative elements tucked behind, within, or projecting off the back. With varying degrees of subtlety the forms themselves reaffirm the painted surfaces, and further draw our attention to what's missing.

All of the work underscores how our time and place affects our perception, but none so well as her reproductions of jewelry that were frozen at one singular point of view by a painter or photographer. A pair of earrings titled *Penelope Cruz Earrings, 2007 Academy Awards* are replicas of the earrings the movie star was photographed wearing at the Oscars. Because of the angle at which the photograph was taken, you can see all of one earring, but only a small corner of the other. Accordingly, Kivarkis reproduces one earring in its entirety, three-dimensionally rendering the original faceted-gem laden surface out of silver and white gold. The other is constructed in precisely the same size and shape, but with a flat blank surface, except that tiny corner that was visible in the photo, which, like its mate, has all of the faceted detail of the original. Here Kivarkis effectively creates the physical presence of absence.

Her piece *Dirk Dirkscz van Santvoort c.1644* is an interpretation of a necklace worn in a seventeenth-century portrait. The painter correctly used foreshortening and diminishing perspective, to render the necklace askew and naturally disappearing as it made its curve around his model's neck. Kivarkis reproduces this necklace (curiously, as a brooch), with all of the painter's distortions and deletions intact, materializing the way we simply imagine what we cannot see.

Kivarkis's artist statement suggests that she is concerned with disrupting the conventional frontal presentation of images that signify luxury. I'd say she achieves this, though I suspect she may be focusing so closely on her historically and socially critical ends, that she's missing the broader implication of her means: that this work disrupts the convention of perception all together.

At the very least, Kivarkis's work calls for a skeptical view of documented history and for keeping attuned to the limitations of our subjectivity as we face our image-saturated culture. But, if we go one step further, we might question the assumption that experiential evidence, what we base *all* of our beliefs on, is proof of anything. "Blind Spot" confronts our way of perceiving. Dare I say Neo-Perception? Like a mirror reflecting a mirror, the never-ending complexity of Kivarkis's jewelry lies in knowing that the observation of her work is equally subject to these very same phenomena. Fascinating.

ALYSSA DEE KRAUSS is a jeweler residing in Leeds, Massachusetts.

from top
PEHR ZETHELIUS
Sugar Bowl and Cover, 1796
parcel-gilt silver
height 9"

COUNT SIGVARD BERNADOTTE
designer for Georg Jensen, Copenhagen
Bowl and Ewer, after 1944
bowl diameter 10"
ewer height 6 1/2"

PERNILLA SYLWAN
Bowl, 2005
silver, perforated, red plastic wire
3 1/8 x 7 3/4"

Photos: Mikael Lammgard

"FIVE CENTURIES OF SWEDISH SILVER: TREASURES FROM THE ROHSSKA MUSEUM"

THE AMERICAN-SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION AT SCANDINAVIA HOUSE-THE NORDIC CENTER IN AMERICA, NEW YORK
FEBRUARY 14–MAY 8, 2007

by ANDREA DINOTO

Think Swedish design, and invariably the restrained, elegant forms of Swedish modernism come to mind. But the groundbreaking exhibition "Five Centuries of Swedish Silver," the first of its kind in the United States, served to correct this shortsighted view. Organized by the Rohsska Museum of Design and Decorative Arts in Gothenburg, the exhibition featured about 100 examples of Swedish silversmithing from the seventeenth century to the present day. Objects demonstrated both uniquely Swedish forms, typified by twentieth-century examples, as well as historical pieces consistent with the international stylistic trends of various eras—seventeenth-century German Baroque, eighteenth-century French Rococo, and nineteenth-century Neoclassicism. However, even these earlier styles "attained an unmistakable Swedish character," according to Elsebeth Welander-Berggren, former director of the Rohsska Museum, who gave a lecture on Swedish silver preceding the exhibition opening. Welander-Berggren notes that Sweden's "long and strong" silversmithing tradition began in 1298. The first known silversmith workshop in Stockholm, she said, dates to 1413, during a period when silver was furnished almost exclusively to churches and the aristocracy. Around the mid-sixteenth century, virtually all church silver was ordered melted down to make coins for Sweden's army, but in 1531, the impending marriage of King Gustav Vasa to a German princess generated many royal commissions for the capital's silversmiths, so that the Swedish king's court could compete in elegance with those of Europe. This was a turning point for Swedish silver, states Welander-Berggren, as the creation of masterpieces ensued to satisfy the demand by both church and nobility.

The term "masterpiece" has come to be used fairly loosely, but it derives from regulations long established in Europe (in Sweden, in 1473) that required all goldsmiths and silversmiths to create four "masterpieces" to qualify for the rank of "master." In Sweden, said Welander-Berggren, the pieces were specified as "two knife handles, one piece of jewelry, and ring with a stone setting." In the seventeenth century, a German-style tankard was required, and by the eighteenth century, the coffeepot, and less often the teapot, held sway. Modern-day Swedish silversmiths need not make a masterpiece, and can choose any form they like.

Many of the stunning objects on display in this exhibition might, to an unpracticed eye, seem not especially Swedish. A delicate 1796 neoclassical sugar bowl and cover by Pehr Zethelius could be from England; an 1886 Gothic Revival drinking horn with its castellated detailing suggests Germanic influence; and the 1764 pear-shaped coffeepot by Johan Bergengren, with its swirling fluted form, could be from the height of French Rococo. And, in fact, Swedish silversmiths often based designs on pattern books and engravings published abroad. But, as Welander-Berggren pointed out, Swedish silver was in these early centuries already displaying a distinctive minimalism, its forms less decorated than was common in Germany. Also, Swedish silver is heavier and, before the second half of the nineteenth century, was made entirely by hand. Mechanization turned Swedish silver design more towards product than art, until the post-World War II era, when the craft revival began to take hold and, as Welander-Berggren noted, "Swedish silversmithing was reborn." A 1944 bowl and ewer with gadrooned body by Swedish count Sigvard Bernadotte, an important designer for Georg Jensen in Copenhagen, displays all the delicacy, balance, and luminosity that one expects from modern Swedish design. Olle Ohlsson's 1971 somewhat biomorphic ewer reflects the craft revival's emphasis on personal expression in design, and Pernilla Sylwan's 2005 perforated bowl bewhiskered with red plastic wire is the epitome of the deconstructed vessel.

"Five Centuries of Swedish Silver" presented clear evidence that the poetic functionalism we've come to expect from twentieth-century design has, in Sweden, been there all the time.

ANDREA DINOTO is a New York–based writer who specializes in art and design.

"THEN AND NOW"

BARRETT MARSDEN GALLERY, LONDON
MAY 18–JUNE 23, 2007

by JULIA HARRISON

Of all the questions that can be asked about jewelry, "What's it worth?" is perhaps the most common—and the least straightforward. Curated by Caroline Broadhead, "Then and Now," at London's Barrett Marsden Gallery, brought together 15 artists whose work examines the myriad factors that influence our notions of value.

In her insightful catalogue essay, Broadhead points out that for many years "art" jewelers dodged the uncomfortable legacy of jewelry's close association with monetary value by sticking to non-precious materials; but for this show she carefully selected artists who choose not to sidestep these issues. Although the show featured gold, diamonds, pearls, and notably fine craftsmanship, there was a pervading sense throughout that value is not something that can—or should—be determined by the scales.

It was a thoroughly clever show, but one in which intellectual irony frequently gave way to strong physical or emotional responses. Some pieces cried out to be worn; others to be cried over. Among the most affecting pieces were those dealing with emotional loss and the reverse alchemy that turns one generation's treasure into another's scrap. Laura Potter fashioned a military-style *Lifetime Medal* from vintage gold jewelry and the cross-stitched statement: "This is the contents of my late grandmother's jewelry box sold as scrap." Lin Cheung's *Hidden Value* evoked the futility of trying to get to know an ancestor by his or her possessions; the necklace of graduated mass-produced gold lockets suggested a wearer being slowly choked by unshared secrets.

An almost aching sense of material loss was explicitly portrayed by Kim Buck's *String of Pearls with Gold Lock*, a set of disconnected brooches that retain the imprint of an absent necklace, and Manon van Kouswijk's *Pearl Necklace with No Pearls*, a vulnerable swag of knotted silk cord with a gold clasp.

Safer perhaps to invest in was A'N'D's oddly reassuring "body stamps," wearable rubber stamps that can be used to ink images of jewelry directly onto the skin; when these jewels wash down the drain, you can always make more.

The spirit of the "Antiques Roadshow" seemed to hover over Maria Militsi's selection of bespoke ornaments, tailored to fit antique presentation boxes from some of the most famous jewelers of old London. Another elegant reference to the trade appeared in Kim Buck's *Solitaire Rings*, extruded tubing with a wedding-ring-shaped cross section—offering commitment "by the foot"? Both Buck's rings and Laura Potter's christening bracelet engraved with the single word "*Bastard*" comment on the disconnect between traditional jewelry and the complexities of human relationships.

Gijs Bakker addressed issues of authenticity and craft with a giddy series of brooches and rings twinning gaudy faux sparklers with smaller "real copies" in precious stones and metal. Karl Fritsch took the opposite approach with a series of rings that break all of jewelry's usual rules, with mismatched elements grafted on at odd angles, stones that are not so much set as impaled, and copious firescale—a bravura display of "bad" craftsmanship.

Marc Monzo hid craftsmanship behind "A Flat Surface," a series of rings whose idiosyncratic shanks are all topped with identical rectangles of mirror-polished metal. To observers, one anonymized ring is much the same as the others; its individuality is revealed to the wearer alone.

In Suzi Tibbetts's series "Crown Jewels: Diamond Necklace," tiny diamonds were set into the sealed caps of large empty beer bottles, with the chain dangling down inside. Lurking behind the slickly commercial packaging is this kicker; to free the pendant the wearer must wield a bottle opener. The series heightened the horrible moment when a new treasure receives its first scratch or dent, before damage mellows into patina. Rory Hooper took the theme of damage even further, flattening vintage pins and pendants into "Chewing Gum" and evoking the sentimental pull of failed relationships with *My Memories*, a chain composed of crushed silver rings.

"Then and Now" did not offer any easy answers to the question of how and why we assign value; even the exhibition design was resolutely poker-faced, with the all the works temptingly out in the open, either pinned or draped on squares of neutral brown cardboard. The show as a whole turned the question of value back on its audience, challenging them to consider, "What's it worth to *you*?"

JULIA HARRISON is a woodcarver and a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology at University College, London.

top to bottom
KIM BUCK
String of Pearls with Gold Lock, 2003
silver, gold
each brooch 1 1/4 x 1 1/4 x 3/8"
Photo: Ole Akhøj

GIJS BAKKER
Perticolour Brooch no.341, 2006
opal, tanzanite, amethyst, corundum, emerald, topaz, 14k gold, silver plate, metal, glass, plastic
length 2 3/8"
Photo: Rien Bazen

SUZI TIBBETTS
Crown Jewels: Diamond Necklace, 2007
found objects, silver chain
height 9 7/8"

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by DANA SINGER

SNAG WELCOMES NEW EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER

The Editorial Advisory Committee of *Metalsmith* welcomes its newest member, metalsmith Kim Cridler, an assistant professor in the metals program at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She joins current EAC members Sharon Church, Ursula Ilse Neuman, Mija Riedel, SNAG board liaison Sandie Zilker, and editor Suzanne Ramljak. SNAG sincerely thanks departing EAC member and Chair Kate Wagle, head of the Department of Art, University of Oregon, for her years of dedicated service and wise counsel. Sharon Church is the new Chair of the Committee.

SNAG CO-SPONSORS NORTHWEST EXHIBITION AT EUGENE, OREGON, AIRPORT

In partnership with The Gallery at the Airport in Eugene, Oregon, SNAG opened the juried exhibition, "And How! Celebrating Art and Soul in Contemporary Metalwork," last November. Seen by 250,000 travelers throughout the holiday season, "And How!" featured 58 pieces by 35 SNAG members in Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho, and British Columbia, made with a variety of materials and formats. Exhibited alongside the work were the tools used to make these creations and explanations of the various processes. The exhibited artists included Harriete Estel Berman, Lin Cook, Catherine Grisez, Lee Rumsay Haga, Julia Lowther, Rebecca Scheer, and Anika Smulovitz. The works were selected by Christine L. Sundt, SNAG member and Eugene jewelry artist, and Dena Brown, Director of the Gallery. The exhibition closed February 29.

SNAG PARTICIPATES IN ETHICAL JEWELRY SUMMIT

The "Madison Dialogue Ethical Jewelry Summit," held last October at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., convened 100 people, including SNAG board member Stewart Thomson, to discuss ethical jewelry and small-scale mining issues. Those in attendance represented every step in the full supply chain of both metals and gemstones, from those quite literally with their hands in the ground—artisanal and small-scale mines and their communities around the world—all the way to the retailer and customer.

The Madison Dialogue is a "cross-sector initiative" established to promote communication and collaboration among all the groups, entities, and individuals involved in the issues surrounding responsible gold, diamonds, and gemstones. This Summit was the first time such a group has gathered to talk about these issues. One of the Summit organizers was Ethical Metalsmiths, founded by Susan Kingsley, Christina Miller, and Jennifer Horning. Kingsley and Miller are the SNAG members who proposed the Responsible Mining Resolution passed by SNAG at the Chicago conference in May 2006.

ERRATA

The brooch worn by David Montague on page 34 of *Metalsmith* vol 28 no 1 was mistakenly attributed to Daniel Jocz. The brooch (shown at right) is in fact a piece made by artist Joe Wood.

DANA SINGER is executive director of SNAG.

clockwise from left
Kim Cridler, newly appointed member of *Metalsmith's* Editorial Advisory Board

View of the SNAG sponsored exhibition, "And How! Celebrating Art and Soul in Contemporary Metalwork," at The Gallery at the Airport in Eugene, Oregon

Two attendees at the Ethical Jewelry Summit, one from the World Bank and one from Peru, stand before a draft of the community declaration that was formulated by Bill Gallagher of Lori Bonn Designs

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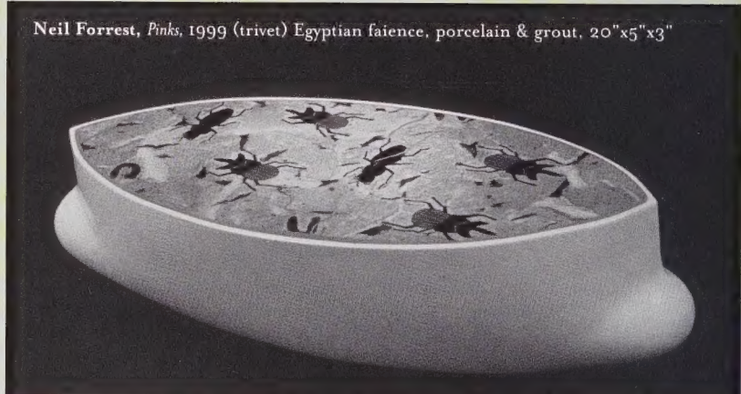

Neil Forrest, *Pinks,* 1999 (trivet) Egyptian faience, porcelain & grout, 20"x5"x3"

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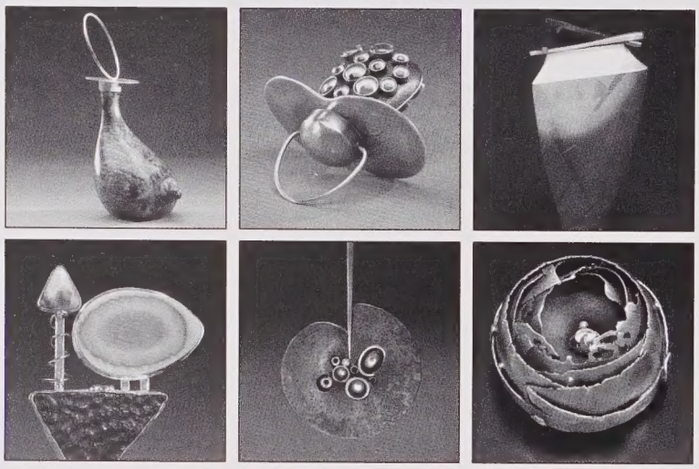

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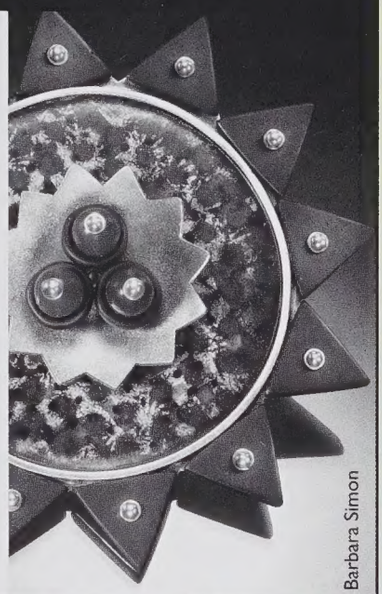

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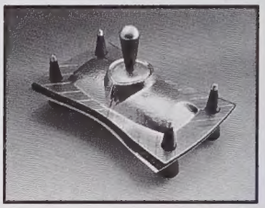
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image: Kari Rinn, fellow, 2007

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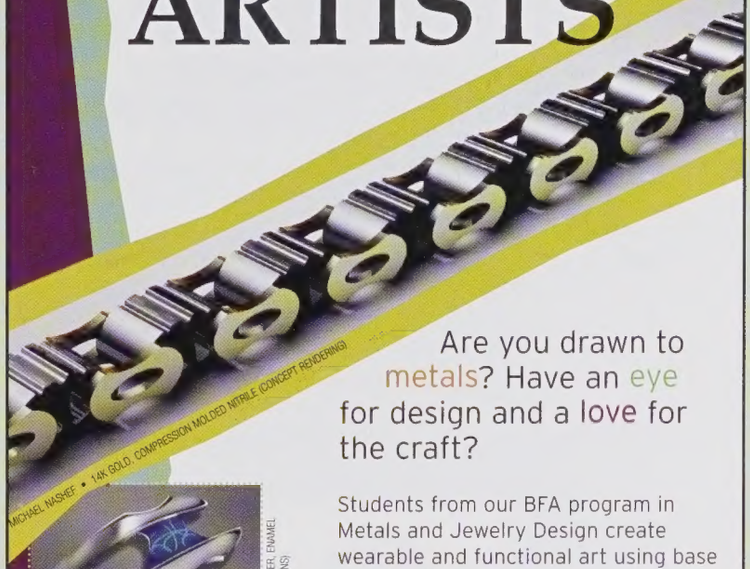

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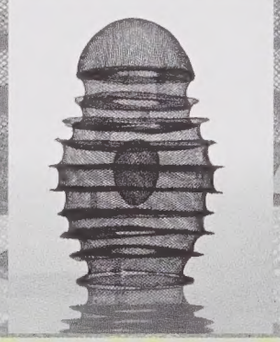

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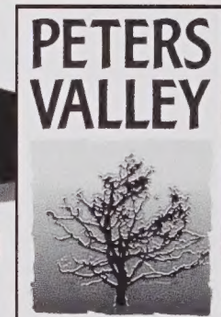

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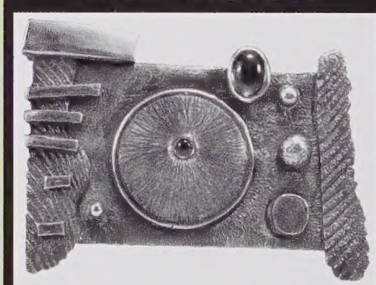

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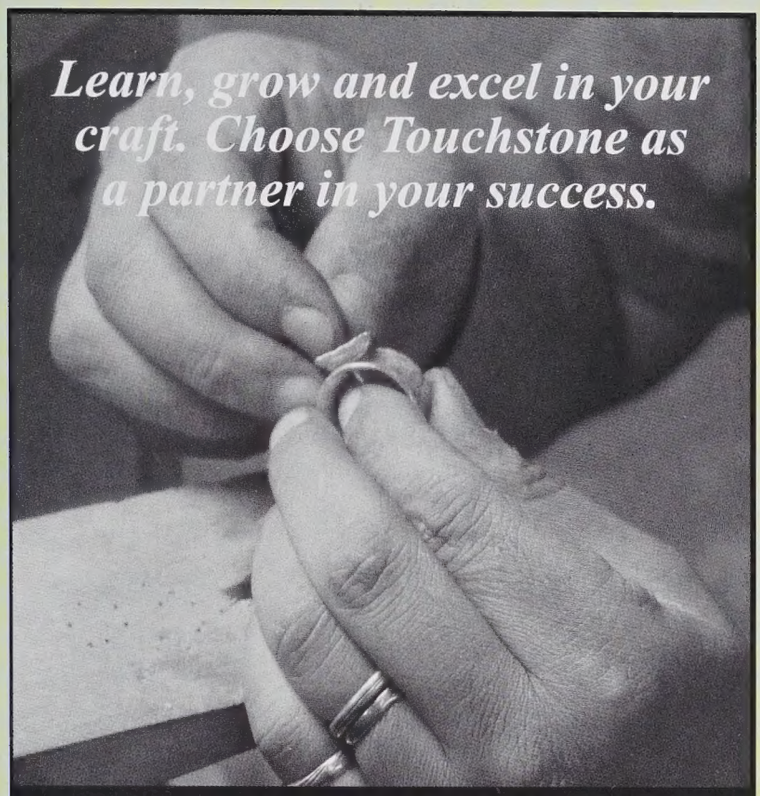

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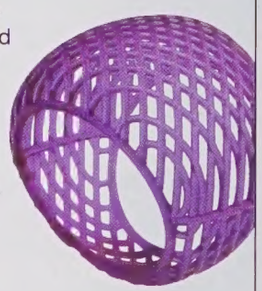

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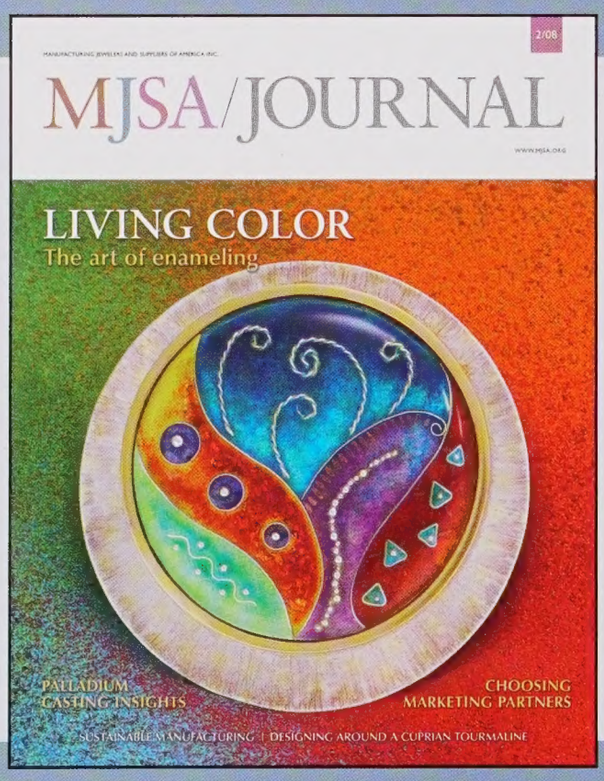

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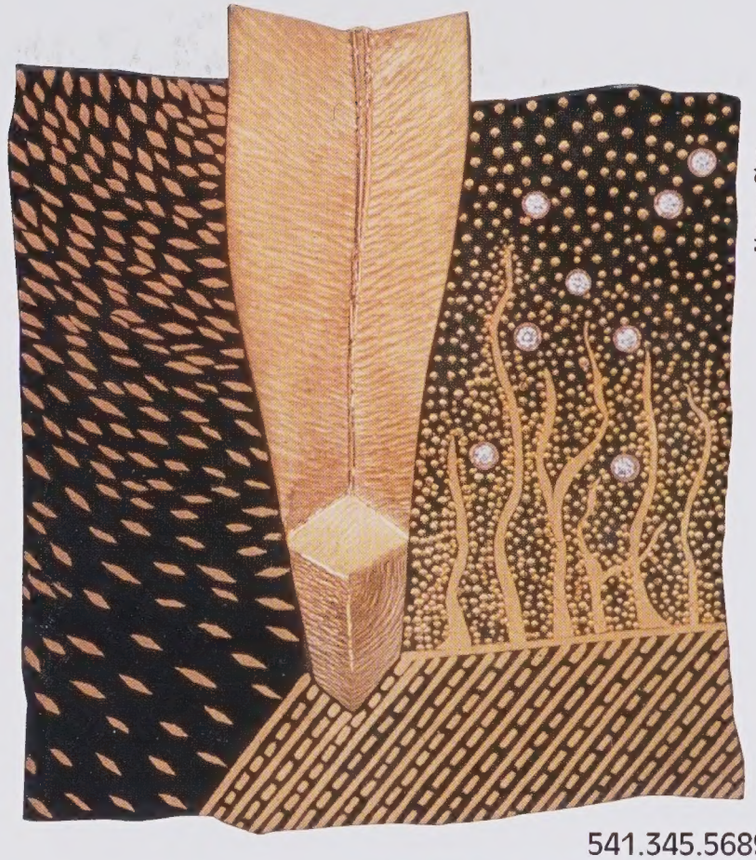

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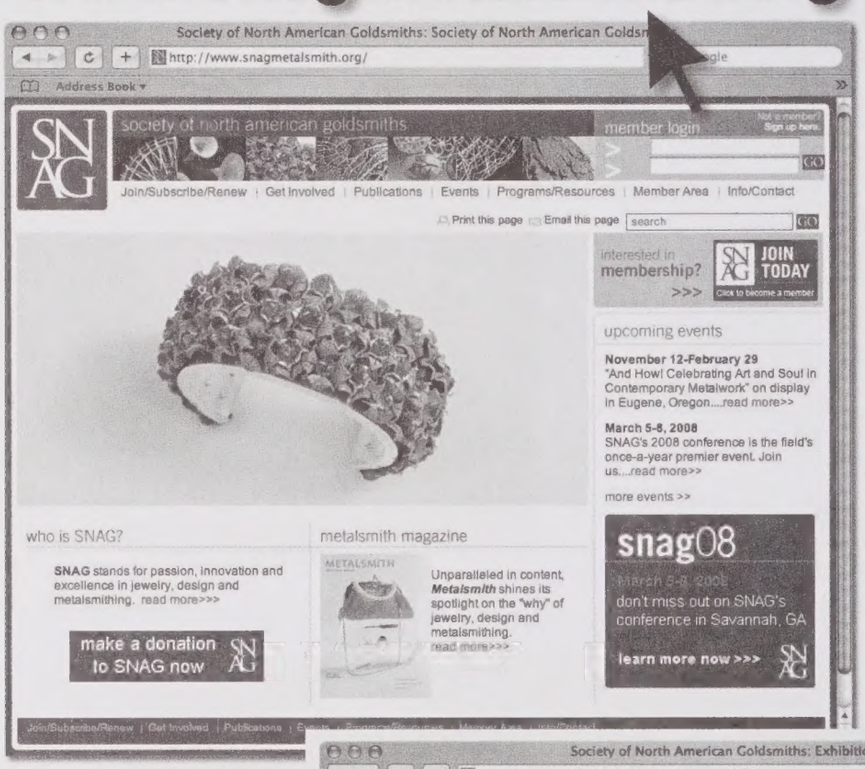
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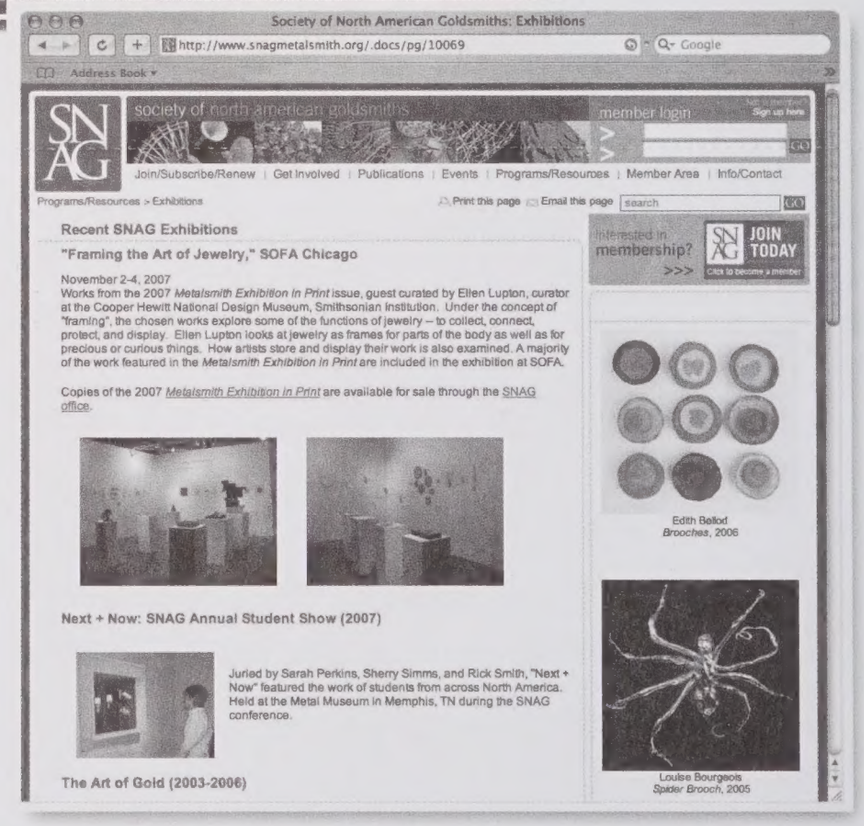
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Works from the 2007 Metalsmith Exhibition in Print issue, guest curated by Ellen Lupton, curator at the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution. Under the concept of "framing", the chosen works explore some of the functions of jewelry – to collect, connect, protect, and display. Ellen Lupton looks at jewelry as frames for parts of the body as well as for precious or curious things. How artists store and display their work is also examined. A majority of the work featured in the Metalsmith Exhibition in Print are included in the exhibition at SOFA.
Copies of the 2007 Metalsmith Exhibition in Print are available for sale through the SNAG office.
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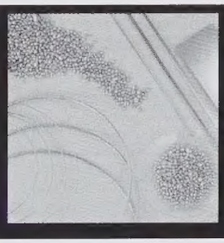

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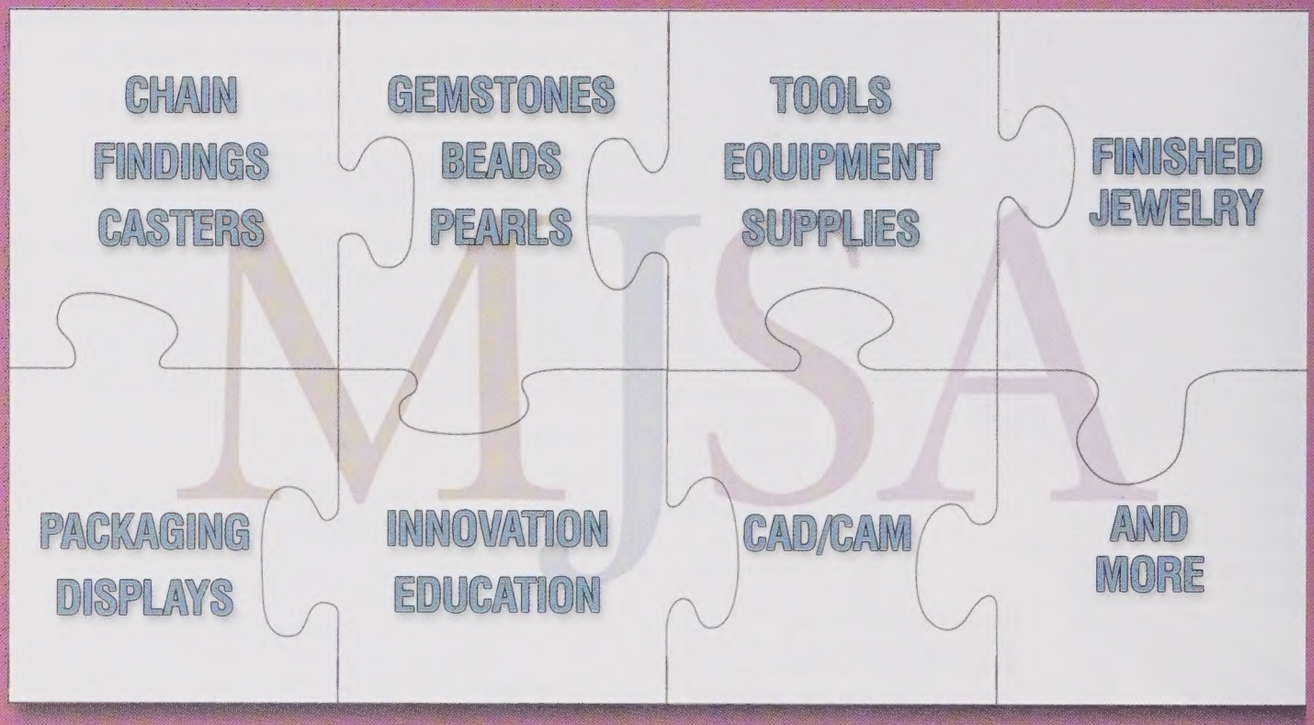

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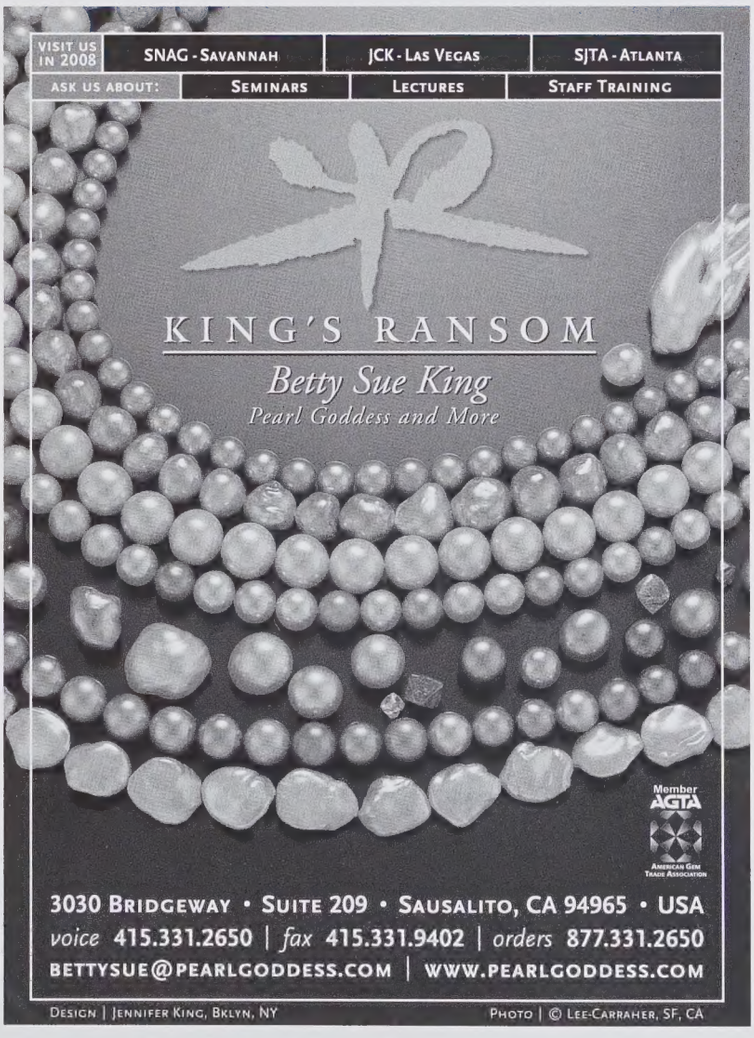

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